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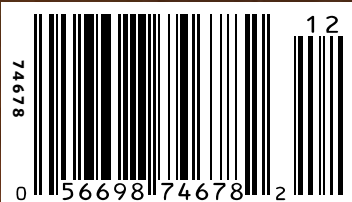
Faith in Action for Social Justice

¡Justicia!

**How Latina and Latino
Christian leaders are
transforming social justice.**

**Los Angeles Bishop
Minerva Carcaño**

PLUS:
Bill McKibben on the Paris climate talks
Welcoming Advent—and Pope Francis
The beginning of the end of pro football?



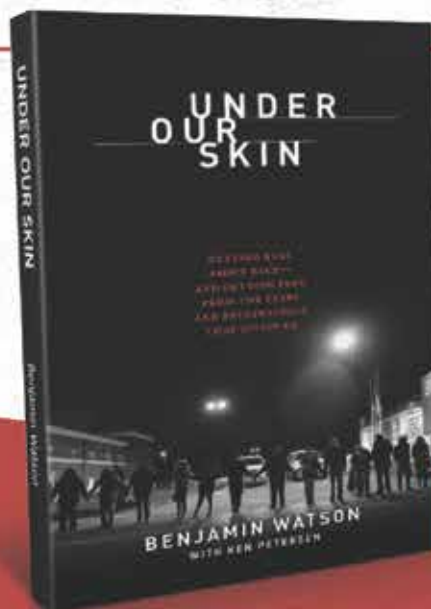
LET'S ADMIT IT. WE ARE ALL:

**ANGRY
CONFUSED
OFFENDED
SAD
HOPELESS**

"Black and white people see the world through completely different lenses...Each side believes their view is the true reality, and we can't understand why the other side doesn't see the same thing and understand our reality."

Benjamin Watson, *Under Our Skin*

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CONVERSATION
IS AS SENSITIVE,
CHARGED, OR
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ONE ABOUT RACE.**



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16



32



40

sojourners

contents

DECEMBER 2015 Vol. 44 | No. 11

COVER

16 iJusticia!

How Latina and Latino Christian leaders are transforming social justice. In English and Spanish.

by **Maria-Pia N. Chin**

FEATURES

24 A Planet Worth Fighting For

At the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel age, people have the power to turn things upside-down.

by **Bill McKibben**

28 Stranger in a Strange Land

Again and again, "outsiders" play key roles in the biblical story.

by **Grace Ji-Sun Kim**

32 A Better Monk Would Know

An essay on how we live the lives we choose.

by **Brian Doyle**

CULTURE WATCH

40 Reparations vs. Reconciliation

Reviews: *Chosen?*; *Reclaiming Conversation*; *Messianism Against Christology*; *A Strangeness in My Mind*

42 Eyes & Ears, by Danny Duncan Collum

43 On Film, by Gareth Higgins

COMMENTARY

8 Advent at the border

9 Syria

10 Naming Denali

DEPARTMENTS

5 Letters

48 Living the Word

by **Jason Byassee**

COLUMNS

7 Hearts & Minds

by **Jim Wallis**

12 Moving Mountains

by **Lisa Sharon Harper**

14 Grain of Salt

by **Jim Rice**

50 H'rumpths

by **Ed Spivey Jr.**



WORK FOR SHALOM **TOGETHER**

Pastors Joy Johnson and Bret Widman, who met through a Fuller Seminary Micah Group, are building bridges of reconciliation in their Sacramento community. Micah Groups bring ministry leaders from diverse contexts together—to learn from one another in a safe space, and to support and challenge one another to become agents of love, mercy, and justice in the world.

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“AND THE WORD became flesh.” To be sure, these are Advent words, God doing a new thing in the flesh-and-bone mystery of God among us. As editors, we’re reminded how these words speak to the incarnational dimension of our work: shepherding stories of faith and justice into your hands—words we hope will encourage you and challenge you, yes, but also inspire you to act.

In our cover story Maria-Pia Negro Chin, a bilingual journalist based in New York, tells the story of Latino and Latina Christian leaders who are transforming the way the church understands what it means to do justice and love mercy. Consider: While the conversion stories of many Christians involve “discovering” the biblical call to social justice, for

many Latino and Latina Christians, justice has always been an integral component of their faith. “You cannot be a Latino pastor and not address the undocumented, not address the school system, not address salaries in urban or rural environments,” says Fuller Theological Seminary vice president Juan Martínez. “It hits you in the face every day, and we have to address the consequences.”

Taking our cue from these leaders whose understanding of justice is rooted in a



Juan Martínez

multilingual, multicultural context, we published the cover story in both English and Spanish—a first for *Sojourners*. For English-only speakers, we hope this serves as a reminder that our own perspective is limited. For those who regularly navigate multiple languages and cultures, especially Latino and Latina Christians, we hope you’ll

continue to heed the challenge of Bishop Minerva Carcaño: “It is our responsibility to be a voice for justice and to be able to sit at the table with others.” ■

Letters

Church as a Safe Place

In response to Sandi Villarreal’s article “Shelter in the Storm” in September-October 2015, can I add that substance abuse is a common coping strategy for those who have experienced trauma? If the church can also provide a safe space for those who struggle with addiction, beyond merely providing physical space for AA/NA meetings, perhaps we can begin to address the underlying issues that are fueling the current heroin epidemic. Addiction is a protective strategy intended to help the individual survive the emotional dysregulation caused by trauma, not a moral or spiritual failure.

Debbie Ruisard
sojo.net comment

Call for Repentance

Ryan Herring’s article in the September-October 2015 issue (“Now Is a Time for Theology to Thrive”) was disappointing. Rather than give a balanced assessment of what the church should address regarding those issues surrounding racism, he instead launched into what is just one among many diatribes of predictability: a canonization of Michael Brown with a corresponding demonization of law enforcement.

Should the church address racism and systemic oppression? Yes! We should do so, however, within the framework of the same

Substance abuse is a common coping strategy for those who have experienced trauma.

gospel that we have been about for the past 2,000 years: namely, calling all people everywhere to repentance. There is an antiquated (though valid, I think) term for what has been going on in Ferguson and around the country today. It is called “sin.”

David Mercer
Palatine, Illinois

Implicit Bias in a Sundown Town

My hometown of Goshen, Ind., was a “sundown town” well into the 1970s, with many subdivisions remaining white only, if not directly by housing policies then indirectly by intentional sales practices by realtors. I grew up in Goshen and was exposed to little diversity in my school. In a sense, the town my generation inherited was one where we were robbed of growing up with a more diverse population where diversity was the norm and was celebrated.

Now I see implicit bias (discussed in Lisa Sharon Harper’s column “Four Easy Ways to Be a White Supremacist” in the September-October issue) in myself, and I hate it and have to work continuously to overcome it. White supremacy and implicit bias are tough subjects to face head on, but for the Kingdom

of God to be brought forth by Christians, we must face this directly.

Terry Martin
Facebook comment

Loving Both Israel and Palestine

Returning home from Texas recently, I finally had time to catch up on some important reading, including Jim Wallis’ article in the March 2015 issue titled “Choosing the Side of Justice.” For years I have stammered about with some of my Southern, conservative, evangelical friends, trying to find some way to explain my opposition to all-or-nothing Zionism. In one succinct and powerful page of prose you have encompassed the problem we face today as Christians who love both Palestinians and the people of Israel. I felt as though King Solomon had stepped onto our modern stage and spoken truth into the midst of our confusion and polarity.

Betty Pulkingham
Burlington, North Carolina

Your name here! Write to letters@sojo.net or Letters, *Sojourners*, 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Include your name, city, and state. Letters may be edited.

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Sojourners magazine (ISSN 0364-2097) is published monthly, except September-October is combined, at 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Periodicals Postage Paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Canadian Publications Sales Agreement #257494. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Sojourners, PO Box 48, Congers, NY 10920-9856.

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BY JIM WALLIS

Welcoming Emmanuel



THE MONTH of December brings with it the season of Advent and Christmas. It's always been my favorite time of the year, because it shows us powerfully and practically how our Christian faith entered the world. The incarnation is unique among world religions. The way I like to say it: In Christ, God hits the streets. Christmas gives Christians the annual opportunity to remember the incarnation of God's love breaking into the world—how it did and how it still can.

Advent is about waiting, and Christmas brings the newborn who announces a new order meant to turn the world upside down—and our lives with it. Christmas always renews my commitment to bring that revolutionary love into a world that so desperately needs it, and into my own life again.

In the bustle of our daily lives, with all of the distractions and struggles that come our way—even in Christian ministries—it is so easy for us to lose sight of the transform-

On treating people in the way Jesus treated people?

THAT'S WHY IT was such a profound moment for me and for many of us in the U.S. when Pope Francis visited in September. Francis exemplified Christ-like behavior in so many ways, both large and small, and reminded all Christians—whether Catholic or not—how we are to live our lives and who we are called to follow. While Francis will be the first to admit that he is not perfect—"I am a sinner," he told an Italian journalist in 2013—he has consistently acted in a way that has drawn the world back to Jesus.

Throughout the pope's visit to the U.S., I saw the gospel proclaimed at the highest levels of power and prominence—at the White House, Congress, the United Nations, and Madison Square Garden, to name a few. Values that Jesus lived and taught—such as simplicity, humility, compassion, grace, service, love, justice, peace, and care for the poor and for creation itself—were lifted up in public venues where they are too seldom found.

Pope Francis called us again and again to a deeper relationship with Jesus. Christ's reign is meant to change everything, and Pope Francis reminded us of that. His messages during the U.S. visit focused on the people at the bottom of society, addressing those Jesus calls "the least of these" in Matthew 25. His actions on many visits with the most marginal were even more powerful than his words in the halls of power. After his eloquent and prophetic words to Congress, Francis visited with the homeless at Catholic Charities in Washington, D.C. He seemed to love his time with underprivileged school children in Harlem. He embraced prisoners in Philadelphia after he told them about their worth



A woman responds to Pope Francis at a Mass in Philadelphia.

Reuters

as people made in the image of God.

The core of the pope's gospel message is about who is really most important and who Jesus calls us to value, encounter, and love. The hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner—this is who Jesus ministered to during his time among us, and he says that the way we treat them is how we treat him.

As we think about the meaning and importance of this Advent season, we should think about the good news that entered the world for those at the bottom of society and how the gospel is intended to change all of our lives. Pope Francis showed both the personal salvation and social transformation that is at the heart of the gospel. In his pilgrimage to our country in September, Francis gave us a glimpse of the reign of God, in which all people are actually treated as beings wonderfully loved by God—which we are.

The visit of Pope Francis began Advent for me. As we prepare in the weeks ahead to celebrate the coming of Christ, let's each ask ourselves how we might welcome him again into our own hearts, lives, churches, communities, and even nations. And let us be thankful for Francis and all those believers, known and unknown, for showing us the way to welcome Emmanuel, "God with us." ■

Jim Wallis is editor-in-chief of Sojourners magazine.

Pope Francis' visit gave us a glimpse of the reign of God.

ing love embodied in the person of Christ. So it's vitally important that we have this season to remember and re-encounter and re-center ourselves on the heart of our faith: God breaking into history to transform it, and us, in the person of Jesus.

Christmas always reminds me that being a Christian means being a follower of Jesus, willing to allow that message of the reign of God, a new order of things, to break in again and again.

While that statement about following Jesus may seem obvious, how many of us really focus, on a daily basis, on living our lives as Jesus did? On saying what he said, doing what he did, behaving as he behaved?

Getty Images



100 Miles of Compassion

During Pope Francis' visit to the U.S., 100 women marched 100 miles—from York, Pa., to Washington, D.C.—to spread a vision of dignity and compassion for immigrants. Before the march began, they prayed together in front of the York County detention center. The women have continued marching on the 11th of every month for the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S.

By Sister Norma Pimentel

The Holy Family Arrives at the Border

Advent is a season of journeys—dangerous and otherwise.

THE FAMILIES arriving at the Sacred Heart Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, Texas, all come with one thing in common—a high sense of hope and faith in God. Much like the Holy Family, these families were forced to flee because they feared for the lives of their children.

Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley began a humanitarian crisis-relief program in the summer of 2014 to respond to the influx of immigrants crossing the border who didn't have a place to rest. Many are fleeing the violence in Central America. In El Salvador, for example, the murder rate has more than doubled since 2012 and soon will pass that of Honduras, which has the highest murder rate per capita in the world.

With the help of Sacred Heart Catholic Church and hundreds of volunteers, we were able to open a place of safety for refugees before they continue on their journey. For these holy families, it is the love for their children that moves them to face all

possible dangers by traveling north.

In the biblical story, St. Joseph was a “just man” and faithful. He was forewarned of Herod's imperial violence and fled the coun-

The woman begged the traffickers not to hurt her little girl.

try to protect his wife and infant son. At our center the fathers are also men of profound dedication and attentiveness to the needs of their families.

One young dad had left his home in Central America with his pregnant wife and their two little girls. His wife gave birth in Mexico. As they prepared to cross the Rio Grande into the U.S., he and the baby became separated from his wife and two daughters. He lost them. When he and the 1-month-old baby arrived at our center, he had no idea if his wife and two little girls were alive or if he would ever see them

again. Yet he remained hopeful they would be reunited. The next day, a woman with two little girls arrived at the center. Their story sounded familiar. They'd become separated from the rest of their family while crossing the river. What a moment of joy! We immediately had her call her husband. Soon, all were rested, clean, and together.

Unfortunately, many who make the journey relate experiences of abuse by their traffickers and of predators who search them out to exploit them. For example, a mother arrived with her 11-year-old daughter. The woman had begged the traffickers not to hurt her little girl. Instead, they abused the mother in the most beastly and inhumane ways. She cried silently, hiding her pain from her daughter.

The mothers remind me very much of Mary, who lived an uncertain, painful reality as the mother of Jesus and, at the same time,

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The mission of *Sojourners* magazine is to inspire hope and action by articulating the biblical call to racial and social justice, life and peace, and environmental stewardship.

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Newsstand circulation through Disticor Magazine Distribution Services.
For more information, call (905) 619-6565,
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did everything with profound love and hope in God. In her advent season, waiting to give birth to our Lord, she patiently met all they faced as a family searching for a safe place for her baby to be born. The conditions they encountered were not the best. But what was most important to the Holy Family was that their child was protected and safe.

Immigrant mothers arriving at our center reflect an extraordinary love for their children. They are determined to face all danger and adversity as they set out to find a better life. At the same time, they cry silently, remembering the desperate situations they've fled and the pain and fear they face and that they will continue to face in a future of unknowns.

By Stephen Zunes

What Will Peace Require?

The greatest hope for a peaceful and democratic Syria is its civil society.

THE MOST CRITICAL priority for the international community regarding Syria—in addition to addressing the immediate humanitarian needs—is to implement a cease-fire in as much of the country as possible. An arms moratorium on both the regime and rebel groups must be implemented and strictly enforced. And negotiations for a more democratic and representative government should move forward, even if it initially includes important foreign and domestic elements who do not share those values.

Especially in response to Russian military actions in Syria, President Obama is being pressured by both Republicans and Democratic hawks to militarize the situation further by sending more arms to rebel groups and increasing direct U.S. military involvement. As problematic as such military responses may be, the diplomatic alternatives aren't much better.

Some of the most powerful opposition forces—the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) and other hardline Islamists in the al-Nusra Front—appear to have little interest in negotiations. And the prospect of working out an arrangement that would keep in power Assad's brutal regime, which has been responsible for the vast majority of the more than 100,000 civilian deaths in

Parents with such resilience and tenderness for their young children are extraordinary people. They are not fragile or broken by adversity, but strong and full of love and compassion. They set an example for us. As of August, we have assisted more than 23,000 such individuals at our respite center.

Like them, we can turn to our loving God for strength and reassurance in our lives. No matter what we face, we are protected. In the midst of our Advent journey, if we will only look, we will encounter our Lord. ■

Sister Norma Pimentel is executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley in McAllen, Texas.

the nearly five-year conflict, is extremely hard to accept.

Unfortunately, unlike most dictatorships that have been overthrown by armed or unarmed struggle in recent decades, the power in Damascus does not rest in the hands of a single dictator. Assad heads a longstanding ruling apparatus led by the Baath Party and the military that, despite its corruption and brutality, still has a social base. A fairly large minority of Syrians—consisting of Alawites, Christians and other minority communities; Baath Party loyalists and government employees; the professional armed forces and security services; and the largely Sunni crony capitalist class that the regime has nurtured—still cling to Assad's government.

They constitute a large enough segment of Syrian society so that no anti-regime struggle can win without cascading defections, which is unlikely when the alternative is perceived to be rule by totalitarian Salafists such as ISIS.

During the first six months of the uprising in 2011, when the anti-regime movement was largely nonviolent, pro-democratic, and more diverse in terms of support, it appeared the regime could be eventually toppled. Now, in the context of armed struggle and the rise of Islamist extremists, many who once were

From the Archives

December 1993

The Magic Moment

"IT IS A magic moment and we must seize it." With those words, President Clinton called upon Congress to respond to the "ethical imperative" of "providing universal, comprehensive health care" for all Americans. In the weeks since that speech, Hillary Rodham Clinton has tirelessly explained and defended the technical details of the administration's Health Security Act. But even in her most technical presentations, she has never failed to remind her audience of the moral dimensions of this cause.

... The moral stakes in the health reform battle are enormous, and profound. At issue is the very way we think about health care, and about ourselves as community: Will American society, and its laws, continue to treat health care as just another commercial commodity, to be bought and sold among those fortunate enough to afford it? Or will the United States join the other industrialized nations in recognizing health care as an essential public service, a basic human right, to be made available to all members of the community?

... Timing is crucial. If the political struggle of the coming months ends without enactment of real reforms, advocates for health justice will likely have to wait a full generation before the possibility of reform is again within grasp. In the meantime, an inhumane and profoundly unjust system will have only deteriorated further, at great cost to us all. ■

Gordon Bonnyman was a legal-aid attorney in Memphis, Tenn., when this article appeared.



working to topple the regime see it as the lesser evil.

The perceived Islamist threat has also made it easier for the Assad regime to receive foreign support, including from Russia and Iran. Bringing those governments into negotiations is also difficult for many to swallow, as their arms, along with Iranian advisers and militia, have played an unfortunate role

The future of the country is too important to leave simply to the people with guns.

in strengthening the Assad government's brutal military apparatus. In addition, the vetoes by Russia and China of U.N. Security Council resolutions on Syria have made difficult even nonmilitary responses by the international community.

As inexcusable as these actions by Russia and China have been, however, Western nations bear some responsibility for them. Back in 2011, NATO went well beyond the U.N. Security Council's mandate on Libya, which authorized a no-fly zone to protect civilians but was instead used by NATO to essentially become the air force of the rebels. Given that history, Moscow and Beijing

are leery of giving Western powers any U.N. mandate in regard to Syria. Similarly, decades of U.S. vetoes blocking U.N. actions in response to Israel's war crimes, as well as U.S. military support for allied dictatorships, give the United States little moral authority in challenging Assad's foreign backers.

Ultimately, the greatest hope for a peaceful and democratic Syria is its civil society, which originally launched the anti-regime movement but is currently in tatters as a result of subsequent repression and the rise of armed militias. The civil society represents the majority of Syrians and deserves international support. The future of the country is too important to leave simply to the people with guns.

The best thing, then, that global civil society can do is to pressure our governments to support the inclusion of the Syrian people, listen to what they have to say, and not try to impose a top-down solution that ignores them. Unless a peace settlement has a popular mandate, it cannot be sustained. ■

Stephen Zunes is a professor of politics and international studies at the University of San Francisco and co-chair of the academic advisory committee for the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict.

By Mark Charles

What's In a Name?

Alaska Natives offer the gift of "Denali"—and wisdom on how to live well within the land.

DURING A TRIP to Alaska in September, President Obama announced that the name of Mount McKinley, the highest peak in North America, would be officially restored to Denali, the Koyukon Athabascan name that means "the tall one." This is the name the Athabascan people have used for the mountain for centuries. "This designation recognizes the sacred status of Denali to generations of Alaska Natives," announced the White House.

Apparently, William Dickey, a gold prospector in Alaska, coined the name Mount McKinley "after William McKinley of Ohio, who had been nominated for the presidency, and that fact was the first news we received on our way out of [that] wonderful

wilderness," Dickey wrote in 1896. McKinley was elected the 25th president, but he was assassinated in his second term, never having set foot in Alaska.

Restoring the mountain's rightful name has been a passionate issue for Alaska Natives for more than 100 years.

A few years ago a Native elder was asked for his thoughts on the millions of European immigrants who had flooded Turtle Island, as North America is known to many Native people, to establish a new nation. "They'll leave," he said. "Eventually, after they have used up all the resources and the land is no longer profitable for them, they'll leave. They'll move on to someplace different. And then we, the Indigenous people, will nurse

our land back to health.” That is an incredible perspective from a wise man who has seen the lands of his ancestors senselessly exploited by generations of foreigners.

From an Indian perspective, the U.S. is a country of more than 300 million undocumented immigrants. People from all over the world have left their lands, their homes, their families, and everything they knew and loved to come here. They flocked to this “new world” largely in pursuit of a dream of financial prosperity. But they never asked for permission to be here, nor has permission ever been given.

These migrants are ignorant as to why the mountains lie where they do, why the rivers flow where they flow. As a result, they

President McKinley never set foot in Alaska.

feel lost. They live here like one lives in a hotel room.

For the Indigenous peoples of this continent, however, our creation stories take place in this land. They tell us why that mountain sits where it does, and why those rivers flow where they do. These stories connect us to this land. They ground us. And they motivate us to live here sustainably.

Our uninvited guests desperately want to feel connected to this land as well, but they have no stories, no understanding. Instead they carve their faces into sacred landmarks and name mountains that are eons old after mere men who have never seen them.

My Athabascan relatives in Alaska have given the United States an incredible gift. They have fought to share the name of their sacred mountain. They are giving this nation of immigrants permission to use that name. It is an amazing gesture of both hospitality and mercy.

Perhaps it is also a sign of hope—hope that instead of waiting for their uninvited guests to leave, they might instead be willing to welcome them in, share their stories with them, and train them in how to live well within this land. ■

Mark Charles (wirelesshogan.com) is a speaker, writer, and consultant from Fort Defiance, Ariz., located on the Navajo reservation.

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Death Does Not Reign

POPE FRANCIS called our country to honor the sacredness of all human life. He called on Congress to embrace a consistent ethic of life—to abolish the death penalty. The state killed no one while Francis walked among us. But three days after his departure, blood flowed.

Six people in five states were scheduled to be executed in the U.S. within one week of each other in the beginning of October:

Wednesday, Sept. 30. Kelly Gissendaner, convicted for the orchestration of the 1997 murder of her husband, converted to Christianity while on death row in Georgia. Gissendaner, a respected



convicted of the murder-for-hire of his ex-wife in 2000, but another man recently confessed to having acted alone. Edwards, who has autism, originally confessed to the crime, but at his trial and ever since he has said he was innocent. His death sentence was commuted to life in prison by Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon.

Tuesday, Oct. 6. Juan Martin Garcia was convicted of killing a man in the course of a robbery and was sentenced to death in Texas after his accomplice pled guilty to aggravated assault and testified against Garcia. Garcia appealed, claiming deficient counsel, PTSD, and mental disability, but his appeal failed due to lack of documentation and he was executed.

Wednesday, Oct. 7. Benjamin Cole was scheduled to be executed in Oklahoma, but the same drug protocol concerns that halted Richard Glossip's execution stayed Cole's execution as well.

In one week, the scheduled and carried-out executions of men and a woman who were likely innocent, proven mentally disabled, or had legitimately been reformed taught us some hard truths about ourselves. We are a society that craves blood, not peace; retribution, not reform; revenge, not restoration. These impulses

were clear in the actions of two states and the U.S. Supreme Court in the killings of Gissendaner and Prieto. Advocates were heartened by Gov. Fallin's stay in the case of Glossip, though it was only based on a technicality. And Kimber Edwards' case reminds us all of the fallibility of our justice system and the irrevocability of death.

IN THE FACE of a society that is hell-bent on the maintenance of systemic sin, hope feels fleeting—even foolhardy. But it is not.

Paul sat in a Roman jail, awaiting the death penalty, when he penned these words: “suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us” (Romans 5:3b-5a).

Facing the mighty Roman Empire, Paul says to followers of Jesus: “Have hope!” Why? Because Creator God is more powerful than human empire—even Rome.

Therefore, I have hope that we will finally reckon with our society's illogical, immoral, and unjust thirst for blood. I have hope that the clarity of our sin might also make plain our required repentance. I have hope that our repentance will lead to renewed belief in the possibility of the reform and restoration of broken men and women to our society. I have hope that our repentance will lead to new action toward the reform and restoration of our broken justice system.

Though death may reign for the moment, I hope.

I have hope ... and hope does not disappoint. ■

I have hope that repentance will lead to the reform of our broken justice system.

student of theology, was put to death after three failed Supreme Court appeals.

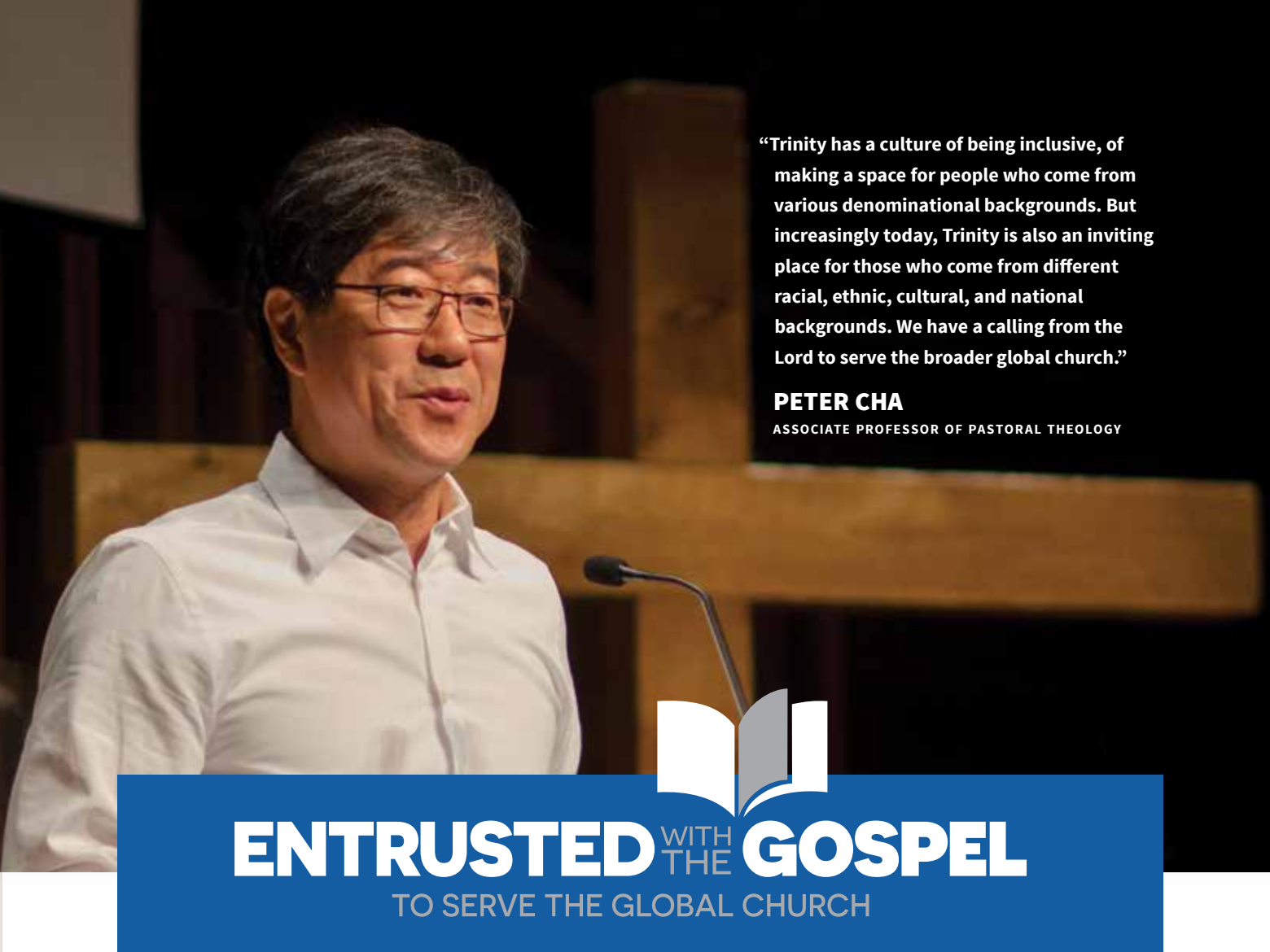
Wednesday, Sept. 30. Richard Glossip, who is widely believed to be innocent of the 1997 murder-for-hire for which he was convicted, was scheduled to be executed in Oklahoma, but Gov. Mary Fallin issued a stay of execution. Fallin offered the stay not because she believed that Glossip was innocent, but rather because of questions over whether the state possessed the legal drug protocol to put him to death.

Thursday, Oct. 1. Alfredo Prieto was executed in Virginia for the rape and murder of a woman and her boyfriend in 1988. Prieto was believed to be a serial murderer with an IQ below 70, according to Amnesty International. Prieto had an appeal pending when the state killed him.

Friday, Oct. 2. Kimber Edwards was



Lisa Sharon Harper (@lisasharper) is Sojourners' chief church engagement officer and author of *The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right* (June 2016).



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Hope, Postponed

THE IMAGE OF Palestinian teenagers pulling out knives and attempting to stab heavily armed, flak-jacketed Israeli soldiers—or civilians, right in front of the soldiers—serves as a sad metaphor for Israel-Palestine these days. The desperation, the futility, the massive disproportionality of firepower—it's all there.

Of course, what really happened in recent violent incidents is subject to contentious dispute, as is so much else in the region. Take, for instance, a mid-October clash in East Jerusalem. The Israeli police gave their version of events: Border police officers confronted a Palestinian man, who pulled a knife and tried to stab them. They fired at him to “neutralize” the attack, and he died of his injuries.

The Palestinian News and Information Agency's version added significant details: The “man” killed by Israeli soldiers was actually a 16-year-old named Muta'az Owaisat, and the agency reported that the police quickly imposed a military cordon to keep journalists from the scene, near an “illegal Israeli settlement.” The report added, “Earlier Saturday, an 18-year-old Palestinian



Israeli soldiers detain a Palestinian boy accused of throwing stones in Halhul, a town north of Hebron.

Reuters

turned out to be Jewish himself.”

A lot of ink is spent explaining what “caused” these latest outbreaks—it's usually summarized as Israel's attempts to restrict Palestinians from entering the area of East Jerusalem that houses the al-Aqsa Mosque (and the Temple Mount). But in some ways, looking for a single precipitating cause misses the point. Sometimes, such eruptions are simply a case of a people saying, “I'm not going to take this anymore.”

MORE THAN ANYTHING else, these futile, quixotic eruptions are expressions of desperation and hopelessness—especially the growing sense that the peace process is dead, diplomacy has failed, and the dream of an independent, secure Palestinian state (living in peace next to an independent, secure Israeli state) is no longer attainable. This spring, a Gallup poll reported that almost three-quarters of Palestinians supported the peace process (a third of them strongly)—but only about a fifth believed that peace would ever be achieved.

Of course, such pessimism is reinforced by the facts on the ground, especially the seemingly incessant growth of illegal Israeli colonies on Palestinian land. (There are now almost half a million Israelis living in 121 illegal settlements; in 2011,

Maria Viotti, then-president of the U.N. Security Council, said, “Halting [settlement] construction has been misrepresented as an Israeli concession while in fact international law requires it.”) And, of course, it didn't encourage hope for a peaceful future when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that the Holocaust was a Palestinian's idea, or when he announced this spring that there would be, in the words of a CNN headline, “No Palestinian state on my watch.”

What will it take to interrupt the spiral of violence? The first requirement might be hope itself. Those of us who don't live there and who genuinely desire a just peace for all those who do—for all sides, faiths, and factions—can't in good conscience turn our backs on the situation because it's too entrenched, complicated, or controversial (obviously, people living in the midst of the struggle don't have that luxury).

Our support for nonviolent diplomacy—for a peace process leading to two states, living side by side—can't waver even (especially) when the evidence before us looks bleak. If we

give up on the path to peace, the only alternative is violence, and “days of rage” will turn into much, much worse in the months ahead. ■

Jim Rice is editor of Sojourners magazine.

What will it take to interrupt the spiral of violence?

... was shot by an Israeli settler in central Hebron, in the southern Western Bank, where he was left to die by Israeli soldiers who prevented paramedics from administering medical assistance to him.”

An anecdote in *The Washington Post* illustrated the senselessness of the violence: “As an atmosphere of fear and vengeance spread, a young Jewish Israeli stalked an Ikea parking lot in Kiryat Ata, a town in northern Israel, apparently looking for Arabs to attack,” the *Post* reported. “He repeatedly stabbed a man who





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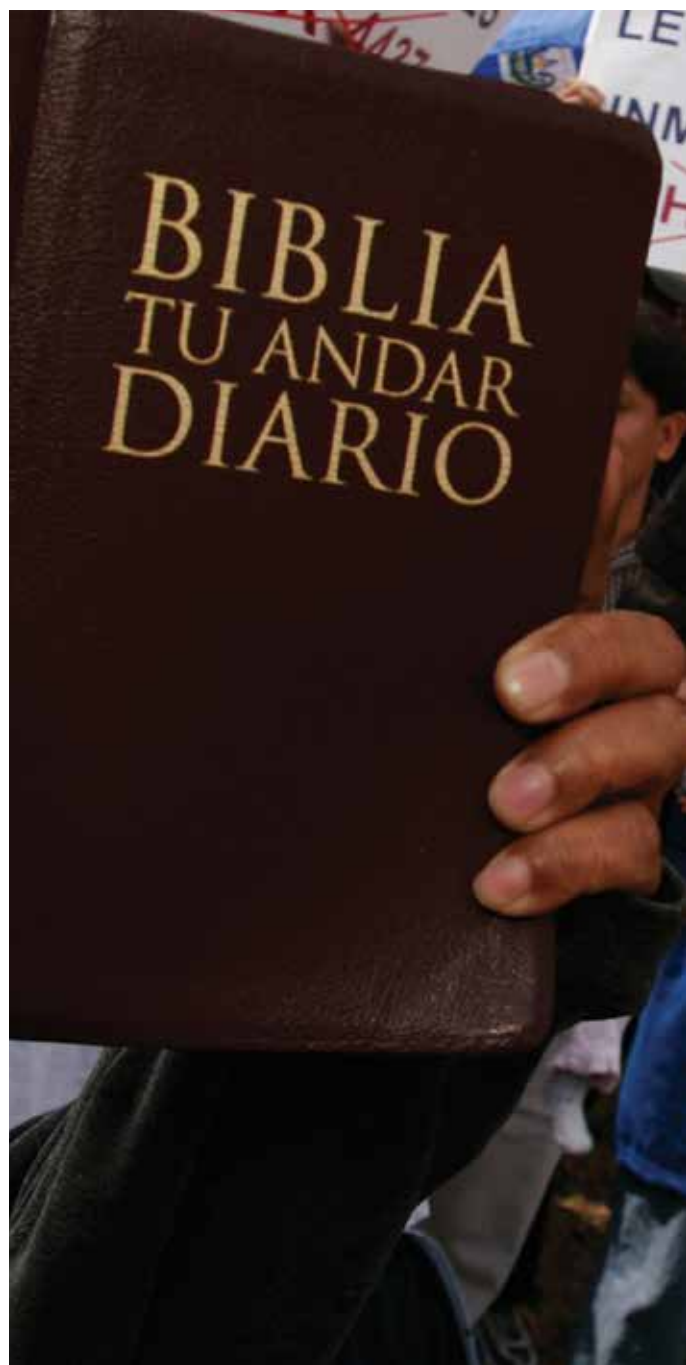
How Latina and Latino Christian leaders are reshaping the church's understanding of social justice.

ALTHOUGH FOURTH in his high school class, Juan Martínez was never encouraged to take an AP exam or think about college. Like many other Latinos in California during the 1970s, it was assumed he would become a farm worker.

But Martínez, now vice president for diversity and international ministries at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., had a different calling; he continued his education and became a Mennonite Brethren pastor. He's now earned two master's degrees and a Ph.D. in theology, but Martínez still credits his father, also a pastor, for teaching him how to minister in the Latino community.

As a child, Martínez watched his father help families broken by immigration raids, support manual laborers facing exploitation, and march with other leaders in Kettleman City, Calif., to protest an enormous toxic waste dump that was created without informing the migrant workers who lived nearby. Yet Martínez's father never considered his work "social justice," a term he associated with churches that downplayed morality and personal salvation. For his father, said Martínez, addressing injustice against his congregation was simply "part of the daily life of the church."

Continued on Page 18



cia!



Andy Kropp/Redux

Cómo es que líderes cristianos latinos están transformando lo que la iglesia entiende sobre la justicia social.

AUNQUE ERA EL CUARTO mejor en su clase en la escuela secundaria, a Juan Martínez nunca lo impulsaron a tomar clases avanzadas o a pensar en ir a la universidad. Se había dado por hecho que trabajaría en el campo, como muchos otros latinos en California en la década de 1970.

Sin embargo, Martínez, quien es rector del Seminario Teológico Fuller en Pasadena, California, tenía otro llamado. Continuó sus estudios y fue pastor de la Iglesia Hermanos Menonitas. Actualmente tiene dos maestrías y un doctorado, si bien Martínez reconoce que su padre, quien también fuera pastor, fue el que le enseñó cómo ser ministro en la comunidad latina.

Desde niño Martínez observó como su padre ayudaba a familias separadas por redadas migratorias, apoyaba a trabajadores que sufrían explotación y marchaba al lado de otros líderes de Kettleman City, California, para protestar por un terreno lleno de desechos tóxicos, abierto sin informar a los trabajadores inmigrantes que vivía en la localidad. Sin embargo, el padre de Martínez nunca pensó que trabajara buscando “justicia social”, un término que él asociaba con iglesias que minimizaban la moral y salvación personal. Para su padre, según Martínez, el enfrentarse a las injusticias que afectaban a su congregación era simplemente “parte de la vida diaria de la iglesia”.

Continúa en la página 19



Juan Martínez, vice president at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, Calif.

Continued from Page 16

Like his father, Martínez's ministry as a Latino pastor has involved dealing with the realities of his congregation, including the plight of migrants. But unlike his father, Martínez does not mind the label "social justice" because he believes the church exists for both community transformation and personal conversion.

"You cannot be a Latino pastor and not address the undocumented, not address the school system, not address salaries in urban or rural environments," said Martínez. "It hits you in the face every day and we have to address the consequences." What's starting to change, Martínez explained, is that a new generation of Latino and Latina leaders are using

communities by building houses, providing job-training, offering legal assistance for low-income immigrants, and launching an AIDS-awareness program. Or the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, whose vision statement says it is out to replace the "media-exacerbated image of angry white evangelicals" with "a convicted yet compassionate multiethnic kingdom culture community committed to sharing truth with love."

But Latino and Latina Christian leadership extends well beyond Latino organizations. And these leaders are clear: Faith and social justice are inextricably linked. "We are called to make the world a more

"The issues of social justice—defined through an African-American lens, a Latino lens, an East Asian lens—are not the same." —Juan Martínez



Anthony Suárez-Abraham, first Latino director of the Office for Peace and Justice in the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago

"social justice vocabulary" to call attention to the problems facing their communities.

"I think this thing is growing"

In 2011, President Barack Obama surveyed the crowd of pastors gathered at the 10th annual National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast. "I have to say," said President Obama, who had attended the gathering two years earlier, "I think this thing is growing."

President Obama was right; the U.S. Latino population—currently 17 percent of the total U.S. population—continues to grow and is expected to double by 2060. And with more than 80 percent of U.S. Latinos identifying as Christian, Latino and Latina leaders are reshaping the landscape of U.S. Christianity.

For clues about what this new religious landscape might look like, consider the National Latino Evangelical Coalition (NaLEC), one of the fastest-growing Latino organizations, headed by Rev. Gabriel Salguero, which made 2015 headlines by becoming the first evangelical entity to officially oppose the death penalty and which continues to lead on other issues as well. Or Esperanza, the network of Latino congregations that started the National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast and has invested \$13 million into strengthening Latino

just place," said Los Angeles Bishop Minerva Carcaño, the first Latina to become a bishop of the United Methodist Church, and an advocate for immigrants. Recalling her own experience growing up in Texas' Rio Grande Valley, one of the poorest areas in the U.S., Carcaño says she feels called to open the door for others.

Anthony Suárez-Abraham, who was the first Latino director of the Office for Peace and Justice in the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, agrees. "The work of justice for Christians is not an optional aspect of faith but precisely an expression of it," said Suárez-Abraham. To illustrate how Latino leadership might change U.S. Christianity, he pointed to the example of Pope Francis, the first pontiff from Latin America. "Akin to Pope Francis offering a non-European perspective to the papacy, Latino and Hispanic Christian leadership will enhance justice movements," Suárez-Abraham said.

A bottom-up approach to social justice

"The issues of social justice—defined through an African-American lens, a Latino lens, an East Asian lens—are not the same," said Juan Martínez. In other words, as Latino Christians redefine the U.S.

Continued on Page 20

Al igual que su padre, el ministerio de Martínez como pastor latino lo hace lidiar con las realidades de su congregación, incluyendo la difícil situación de los migrantes. Sin embargo, a diferencia de su padre, a Martínez no le molesta la etiqueta de “justicia social” porque cree que la iglesia existe para la transformación de la comunidad y la conversión personal.

“No puedes ser un pastor latino y no trabajar con los indocumentados, ni tratar el tema del sistema educativo, ni discutir los salarios en zonas urbanas o rurales”, expresa Martínez. “Es algo presente cada día y tenemos que enfrentar las consecuencias”. Lo que está empezando a cambiar, añade Martínez, es que una nueva generación de líderes latinos y lati-

la pena de muerte. O también Ministerios Esperanza, la red de congregaciones latinas que creo el Desayuno Nacional de Oración Hispano y que ha invertido \$13 millones en fortalecer comunidades latinas al construir viviendas, brindar capacitación laboral, ofrecer asistencia legal para inmigrantes de bajos recursos y lanzar un programa de educación sobre del VIH/SIDA. O igualmente considerar la Conferencia Nacional de Líderes Hispanos Cristianos, cuya visión, según su página web, es reemplazar “la imagen exacerbada de los medios de comunicación de evangélicos blancos enfocados” con “una convincente y compasiva comunidad multiétnica seguidora de una

“Los temas de la justicia social—vistos a través de los lentes afroamericano, latino y de asiáticos orientales—no son los mismos”. —Juan Martínez

nas están usando “un vocabulario de justicia social” para llamar la atención a los problemas que están enfrentando sus comunidades.

“Creo que esto está creciendo”

En el 2011, el presidente Barack Obama miró con detenimiento la habitación llena de pastores reunidos para el X Desayuno Nacional de Oración Hispano. “Tengo que decir”, expresó el presidente Obama, quien había ido al evento dos de años antes, que “creo que esto está creciendo”.

El presidente Obama tenía razón. La población latina en EE.UU.—actualmente 17 por ciento del total de la población en el país—continúa creciendo y se espera que se duplique para el 2060. Ya que más de 80 por ciento de los latinos en EE.UU. se identifican como cristianos, los líderes latinos y latinas están transformando el panorama de la cristiandad en EE.UU.

Si se quiere tener una idea de cómo será el nuevo panorama religioso en el futuro, hay que considerar la Coalición Nacional de Latinos Evangélicos (NaLEC, por sus siglas en inglés), una de las organizaciones hispanas de más rápido crecimiento y que es liderada por el Rev. Gabriel Salguero y fue la gran noticia del 2015 al ser la primera entidad evangélica en oponerse oficialmente a

cultura del reino comprometida con compartir la verdad con amor”.

Por supuesto el liderazgo cristiano latino se extiende más allá de las organizaciones latinas. Y estos líderes no se andan con rodeos: La fe y la justicia social están relacionadas inextricablemente. “Hemos sido llamados a hacer del mundo un lugar más justo”, declara la obispa de los Ángeles Minerva Carcaño, primera latina en ser obispa de la Iglesia Metodista Unida, conocida como defensora de los derechos de los inmigrantes. Al recordar cuando crecía en el Valle del Río Grande en Texas, una de las áreas más pobres de Estados Unidos, Carcaño dice que se siente llamada a abrir las puertas a otros.

Anthony Suárez-Abraham, primer director de la Oficina de Paz y Justicia de la Arquidiócesis Católica de Chicago de ascendencia latina, está de acuerdo. “Para los cristianos trabajar por la justicia no es un aspecto opcional de la fe sino una expresión de ella”, dijo. Para ilustrar cómo el liderazgo latino puede cambiar la cristiandad en EE.UU. señala el ejemplo del papa Francisco, primer pontífice originario de América Latina. “A semejanza del papa Francisco quien representa una perspectiva no europea del papado,

Continúa en la página 21



Los Angeles Bishop
Minerva Carcaño

Continued from Page 18

Christian landscape, they're also redefining how Christians understand the biblical call to social justice.

Hosffman Ospino, assistant professor of Hispanic ministry at Jesuit-run Boston College, put it this way: "Latinos don't have to imagine poverty. Latinos don't need to imagine being an undocumented immigrant because very likely an uncle or a friend or a neighbor has experienced it," he said. Thus, unlike their Euro-American counterparts, Latino Catholic leaders often focus their justice work on the grassroots level, said Ospino, who recently conducted a national study of Catholic parishes with Latino ministries. "These are people who are helping

percent of Latino Catholics said they were concerned about climate change, compared to 43 percent of white mainline Protestants, 53 percent of white Catholics, and 35 percent of white evangelicals. Likewise, Latino Catholics are three times more likely than white Catholics to believe they'll be personally impacted by climate change.

This is not surprising, said Father Roberto Mena, a spokesperson for Catholic Climate Covenant. He explained that people with roots in Latin America know their regions "are suffering the consequences of climate change and the destruction of nature." And with extreme weather and issues such as mega-mining, mono-agricul-

Latino congregations "work on creating solutions where they are ... with whatever human resources and capital they can harness." —Gastón Espinosa



Gastón Espinosa,
Claremont McKenna
College

neighborhoods, advocating for young people involved in gangs, helping those who are hungry," he said.

Gastón Espinosa, a professor of religious studies at Claremont McKenna College specializing in U.S. Latino religions, also identified a bottom-up approach to social justice as a distinguishing feature of Latino congregations. "They work on creating solutions where they are at—in the middle of often poverty-stricken communities—with whatever human resources and capital they can harness," he said. "There can be no effective long-term solutions in the inner city without making sure Latino faith leaders are invited to the table to discuss the pressing social justice issues."

Although poverty and migrant issues have an undeniable impact in their communities, Latino Christian leaders are increasingly emphasizing the necessity for a grassroots approach to a variety of issues affecting first, second, and third generation Latinos—and society as a whole—including access to education, racial reconciliation, fair wages, and the disproportionate incarceration of people of color.

Not least among these issues is climate change. A 2014 survey from the Public Religion Research Institute found that 73

percent of Latinos to ignore.

According to *Laudato Si'*, the encyclical on integral ecology Pope Francis released earlier this year, this firsthand experience of the effects of ecological devastation is precisely what's been forgotten in current conversations about the environment. People in positions of power have not prioritized issues of ecological devastation, explained Pope Francis, because these leaders are "located in affluent urban areas, are far removed from the poor, with little direct contact with their problems." With more leadership from Latino Christians, it seems likely that the church will make climate change and other ecological concerns a high priority.

No more 'grin and bear it'

The median age of Latinos and Latinas in the U.S. is 27—considerably younger than the overall national median. For some denominations, especially those led by Anglos nearing retirement age, the possibility of an influx of youthful energy sounds promising. "Organizations or movements are giving a platform to Latinos," said Fuller's

Continued on Page 22

Continúa de la página 19

el liderazgo cristiano latino e hispano mejoraría los movimientos de justicia”.

Un enfoque a la justicia social de abajo hacia arriba

“Los temas de la justicia social—vistos a través de los lentes afroamericano, latino y de asiáticos orientales—no son los mismos”, dice Juan Martínez. En otras palabras, al redefinir el panorama de la cristiandad estadounidense, los cristianos latinos también están redefiniendo el llamado bíblico a la justicia social.

Hosffman Ospino, profesor asistente de la Escuela de Teología y Ministerio de Boston College, lo expresa así: “Los latinos no tenemos que imaginar la pobreza. Los latinos no necesitamos imaginar lo que es ser indocumentado porque es probable que un tío o un amigo o un vecino lo haya experimentado”. Por eso, a diferencia de sus contrapartes euroamericanas, los líderes católicos latinos generalmente enfocan la justicia social en el ámbito comunitario, agrega Ospino, quien recientemente dirigió un estudio nacional de parroquias católicas con ministerio hispano. “Se trata de personas que ayudan en sus propios vecindarios, abogan por los jóvenes que están involucrados en pandillas y ayudan a los hambrientos”, sentencia.

Gastón Espinosa, profesor de estudios religiosos en Claremont McKenna College especializados en religiones Latinas en EE.UU., también identifica una justicia social de abajo para arriba como una de las características que distingue a las congregaciones latinas. “Trabajan creando soluciones en las ciudades—en medio de comunidades afligidas por la pobreza—con los recursos que tienen a su alcance”, dice. “No podrá haber una solución a futuro en las ciudades si no se asegura que los líderes de fe latinos serán invitados a la mesa para discutir los urgentes temas de justicia social”.

Aunque no cabe duda de que la cuestión de la pobreza y la inmigración han tenido un gran impacto en sus comunidades, los líderes cristianos latinos están también abordando la necesidad de un enfoque comunitario a problemas que están afectando a latinos de primera, segunda y tercera generación—y a la sociedad—incluyendo el acceso a la educación, la reconciliación racial, salarios justos, y el encarcelamiento desproporcionado de

personas de color.

Uno de estos temas importantes es el cambio climático. Según una encuesta del 2014 del Instituto de Investigación de la Religión Pública, 73 por ciento de católicos latinos dijeron estar preocupados por el cambio climático, en comparación con 43 por ciento de protestantes tradicionales de raza blanca, 53 por ciento de católicos blancos y 35 por ciento de evangélicos blancos. Asimismo, tres veces más católicos latinos que católicos blancos consideraron que serían afectados directamente por el cambio climático.

Esto no es ninguna sorpresa, dice el Padre Roberto Mena, un portavoz de Catholic Climate Covenant. Explica que las personas con raíces en América Latina saben que sus regiones “están sufriendo las consecuencias del cambio climático y la destrucción de la naturaleza”. Y con climas extremos y los problemas de la minería a gran escala, la agricultura de monocultivos y del acceso al agua que amenazan el modo de vida tradicional en lugares como Argentina, Perú, y Brasil, la importancia de la justicia ecológica es difícil de ignorar para los latinos.

Según *Laudato Si'*, la encíclica sobre ecología integral que el papa Francisco distribuyó en el 2015, estas experiencias de primera mano sobre los efectos de la devastación ecológica es precisamente las que terminan siendo olvidadas en las conversaciones sobre el medio ambiente. Las personas en posiciones de poder no le dan prioridad a los problemas de la devastación ecológica, explica el papa, porque estos líderes “viven en zonas urbanas acaudaladas y muy lejos [de los pobres], con apenas contacto directo con sus problemas”. Con más participación de los cristianos latinos como dirigentes, podría ser posible que la iglesia hiciera del cambio climático y otras preocupaciones ecológicas una prioridad.

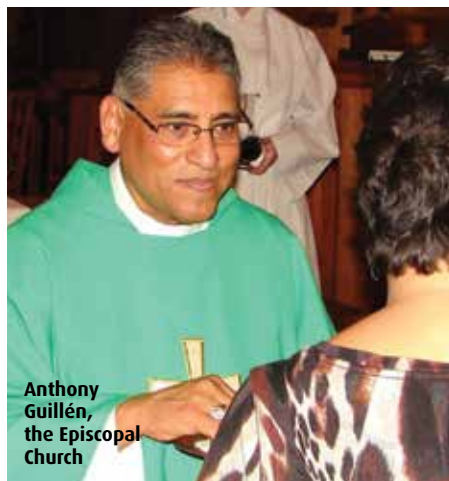
Dejar de ‘aguantarse’

El promedio de edad de los latinos y latinas en EE.UU. es 27 años—considerablemente menor que el promedio nacional. Para algunas denominaciones, especialmente aquellas lideradas por anglosajones que se están acercando a la edad de retiro, la posibilidad de una afluencia de energía y juventud es prometedora. “Las organizaciones o movimientos

Continúa en la página 23



Elizabeth Rios, Center for Emerging Female Leadership



Anthony Guillén, the Episcopal Church



Hoffman Ospino, Boston College

Continued from Page 20

Juan Martínez. “But at the same time, those movements will only have a future if Latinos fill the ranks.”

Yet if churches in the U.S. are hoping to welcome young Latinos and Latinas into their congregations, Latino leaders believe churches must make room for Latino leadership. “We want to see people that look like us—and understand our bilingual, bicultural realities—speaking for us, leading us, and paving the way,” said Florida pastor Elizabeth Rios, founder of the Center for Emerging Female Leadership, who serves on the NaLEC board.

For Rev. Anthony Guillén, officer for Latino/Hispanic ministries for the

including injustice facing the Latino community in the U.S. “If, as a priest, I was a role model and people saw me staying quiet and ‘aguantándome,’ then I was perpetuating the problem,” he explained. “I wanted to show people that we have a right to speak up and work with the system and make this country a better place.”

So Guillén started speaking up when minority opinions were being ignored at meetings or when pastors from Latin America did not feel represented in a worship service at a pastors’ conference. This sparked a dialogue in the church and encouraged other groups whose culture and experiences had been overlooked to

**“We want to see people that look like us—
and understand our bilingual, bicultural realities—
leading us and paving the way.” —Elizabeth Rios**

Episcopal Church, training and educating young Latinos and Latinas is the next step in developing a steady stream of bicultural leaders who can speak to “el pueblo” about their needs while also articulating the call to social justice to church and political representatives.

Guillén knows firsthand that this hasn’t always happened. Growing up in Texas in the 1950s, Guillén faced challenges that could have prevented him from being a leader. After being spanked for “speaking Spanish in the playground” (saying “ay” instead of “ouch” when a classmate fell on him), he learned not to make waves and just tried to fit in. “My father was trying to protect us, and whenever an injustice would happen at school, we were told ‘aguántate,’ (grin and bear it). Don’t respond to your teacher, don’t fight back if a kids hits you, just take it.”

He lived this way for 30 years, until he went to Mexico as a missionary. “I learned another history than the one I was taught in Texas,” Guillén recalled. “When I came back to the States, I found my voice because I felt more confident of who I was as a Mexican-American; I no longer felt ashamed that my last name was ‘Guillén.’”

Guillén realized he had to learn to be a leader who spoke out on behalf of injustice,

ask for change too.

Since then, says Guillén, different Episcopal ministries have gathered to discuss common goals and unique challenges at biennial conferences, which included workshops on mission and advocacy evangelism and social justice. He sees great potential for new Latino Christian leaders. “In the past, there were too few of us,” he said. “Today we are more intentional in training others to have a voice to speak clearly about the issues.”

A place at the table

Elizabeth Rios pointed out that non-Latino Christians can offer concrete support to build new Latino leadership in the church. Her advice to non-Latino Christians is simple: “Find leaders, find a Latino organization that is doing something you admire, and send them resources—either money or volunteers,” she said.

Bishop Carcaño believes there is a clear call for Latino Christians in the U.S.: Answer Jesus’ call to help all people by cultivating their God-given gifts. “It is our responsibility to be a voice for justice,” she said, “and to be able to sit at the table with others.” ■

Maria-Pia N. Chin is a bilingual multimedia journalist who freelances in New York.

le están dando una plataforma a los latinos”, dice Martínez, del Seminario Fuller. “Pero, al mismo tiempo, esos movimientos sólo tendrán un futuro si los latinos engrosan sus filas”.

Ahora bien, si las iglesias en los EE.UU. quieren darles la bienvenida a latinos y latinas en sus congregaciones, los líderes latinos creen que también deben esforzarse para darle cabida al liderazgo latino. “Queremos ver personas que luzcan como nosotros—y entiendan nuestras realidades bilingües y biculturales—hablando por nosotros, guiándonos, abriendo brecha”, dice Elizabeth Ríos, una pastora de Florida que forma parte de la junta directiva de la Coalición Nacional de Latinos Evangélicos.

Para reverendo Anthony Guillén, ministro y dirigente de ministerios latinos/hispanos de la Iglesia Episcopal, entrenar y educar a jóvenes latinos y latinas es el siguiente paso para lograr una afluencia constante de líderes biculturales que le hablen “al pueblo” sobre sus necesidades y a su vez hablen con los dirigentes eclesiales y los políticos sobre el llamado a la justicia social.

A Guillén le consta que no siempre fue así. Al crecer en Texas en la década de 1950 se enfrentó a desafíos que pudieron haber evitado que se volviera un líder. Después de que le pegaran en la escuela por hablar en español (dijo “ay” en lugar de “ouch”) aprendió a no armar revuelo y a tratar de no desentonar. Su padre le enseñó, a él y a sus hermanas, que trataran de obedecer a sus maestros y a la gente con autoridad. “Mi padre trataba de protegernos y si se cometía alguna injusticia en la escuela, nos decía ‘aguántate’. No le respondas al profesor, no respondas cuando un niño te pegue, sólo aguántate”.

Vivió de este modo durante 30 años, hasta que fue a México como misionero. “Aprendí una historia diferente a la aprendida en Texas”, recuerda Guillén. “Al regresar a Estados Unidos descubrí quién era porque acepté que yo era un estadounidense con raíces mexicanas. Ya no me daba vergüenza que mi apellido fuera Guillén”.

Guillén se dio cuenta de que tenía que aprender a ser un líder que hablara contra

la injusticia, incluyendo injusticias que enfrenta la comunidad latina en EE.UU. “Si, como ministro, la gente me consideraba un ejemplo a seguir, que me vieran sin hacer nada y ‘aguantándome’ entonces perpetuaba el problema”, explica. “Le quería mostrar a la gente que tenemos derecho a defendernos y trabajar con el sistema y hacer de este país un lugar mejor”.

Entonces Guillén empezó a alzar la voz cuando las opiniones de grupos minoritarios eran ignoradas en las reuniones o cuando los pastores de América Latina no se sentían representados en cultos religiosos de alguna conferencia de ministros. Esto impulsó el diálogo en la iglesia y animó a estos grupos, cuyas culturas y experiencias también habían sido pasadas por alto, a buscar también un cambio.

Desde entonces, dice Guillén, los diferentes ministerios episcopales se han reunidos para discutir asuntos comunes y desafíos particulares en conferencias bienales, las cuales incluyen talleres sobre misión, activismo evangélico y justicia social. Ahora ve un gran potencial en los líderes cristianos latinos. “En el pasado éramos muy pocos”, explica. “Ahora entrenamos a otros más intencionadamente, para que tengan una voz para hablar claramente sobre las cuestiones”.

Un lugar en la mesa

Elizabeth Ríos señaló que los cristianos no latinos pueden ofrecer un apoyo concreto para construir el liderazgo latino en la iglesia. Su consejo para ellos es simple: “Encuentren líderes, encuentren una organización latina que esté haciendo algo que admiren y envíenles recursos—ya se dinero o voluntarios”, dice.

La obispa Carcaño cree que el llamado a los cristianos latinos de EE.UU. es claro: Responder a la invitación de Jesús a ayudar a que la gente cultive los talentos que Dios le ha dado. “Alzar la voz en favor de la justicia y ser capaces de sentarse con los demás en la mesa es nuestra responsabilidad”. ■

***María-Pía N. Chin** es una periodista bilingüe que escribe desde Nueva York.*

A PLANET WE FIGHTING



ORTH FOR



While world leaders drag their feet on meaningful carbon limits, climate activists begin to turn the tide against the fossil fuel industry • by BILL MCKIBBEN

THOSE OF US who work on global warming are well-defended against even moderate optimism. Every day brings another study showing how far we've pushed the planet's physical systems. For instance, new research has emerged showing that even as the planet is setting remarkable temperature records, the meltwater pouring off Greenland has cooled a patch of the North Atlantic and perhaps begun to play havoc with the Gulf Stream. Simultaneously, new research showed that the soupy hot ocean everywhere else was triggering the third planet-wide bleaching of coral in the last 15 years. It is entirely possible we've set in motion forces that can't be controlled.

That said, for the first time in the quarter-century history of global warming there's room for at least some hope in the arena we *can* control:

Illustration by David Gothard

the desperate political and economic fight to slow the release of yet more carbon into the atmosphere. It's not like we're winning—but we're not losing the way we used to. Something new is happening.

Consider where we were six years ago, as the Copenhagen conference, much ballyhooed and long anticipated, ground to its dreary conclusion: The world had decisively decided not to decide a thing. There was no treaty, no agreement, no targets, no timetables. In fact, the only real achievement of the whole debacle was to drive home to those who cared about the climate that a new approach was needed. Twenty years of expert panels and scientific reports and top-level negotiations had reached a consensus that the planet

then something interesting happened: It spread everywhere else. It became the largest environmental fight in a decade in the U.S., generating more arrests, more emails, more public testimony, more column inches than any battle in a generation. Better yet, it spread laterally. Energy executives began talking about the “Keystone-ization” of a thousand other projects on every continent.

Everywhere, without any central leadership or coordination, people were fighting and sometimes winning—against new coal ports and frack wells and lignite mines. New York won't be fracked, and Australia's Galilee Basin won't be dug up for coal. The pell-mell expansion of the tar sands has ground to a halt.

Even the battles we thought we were los-

The fossil fuel industry gets nothing for free any more—they're harassed wherever they pull out their shovels.

was dangerously overheating. And it had also reached a dead end.

There was a reason for that, or so some of us decided: The fossil fuel industry simply had too much power. The fact that they were the richest industry in the planet's history was giving them total power. They'd lost the argument but won the fight.

And because the rest of us were still arguing, not fighting, there was no real pressure. World leaders could go home from Copenhagen without fearing any fallout from their failure. Barack Obama came back to D.C. where he watched mutely as the Senate punted on climate legislation, and then mostly ignored the issue for three years, not even bothering to talk about it during his reelection campaign.

A movement takes off

In that same period, though, a movement formed. It was led by frontline communities, the people with the most experience dealing with the fossil fuel industry, and it was soon joined by an ever-wider swath of people in every nation.

Consider the fight against the Keystone XL pipeline, for instance. It started with Indigenous communities living near the tar sands in Canada. And then it spread to a fairly small band of climate scientists and activists who understood the danger posed by opening this giant deposit of carbon. And

ing we've started to win. Obama, sadly, let Shell drill for oil in the Arctic this summer, but the opposition of “kayaktivists” and others was so strong that Shell sounded very relieved when they announced in late fall that they hadn't found any oil and were abandoning the effort. In fact, many sources told reporters that reputational damage was probably the main reason for their withdrawal—the writing on the wall came a few weeks earlier when Hillary Clinton, hard-pressed by campaigners, said the Arctic would be off limits should she win. Not long afterward, again after endless pressure, she finally came out against the Keystone pipeline she'd once endorsed. Getting elected required green voters more than it required fossil fuel greenbacks. All of which goes to say that the fossil fuel industry gets nothing for free any more—they're harassed wherever they pull out their shovels.

Going on the offensive

They're harassed whenever they go to the bank too. Not content with playing defense, activists went on the offensive in an effort to tangle the industry's financial prospects. A divestment campaign that began in late 2012 with one small college in Maine selling off its \$13 million endowment passed the \$50 billion mark in the fall of 2014 when the Rockefeller family—heir to the original oil fortune—dumped its fossil fuel stocks. This fall that number passed \$2.6 trillion.

By one count, one in 10 human beings now belongs to an organization that has begun to sell its fossil fuel holdings: Stanford, Oxford, the public university systems of California, Washington, and Hawaii, the United Church of Christ, the Unitarians, the Episcopalians, the Church of England. Coal companies are complaining that they're having a harder time raising new capital; by now the World Bank and Deutsche Bank and the Bank of England have endorsed the campaign's basic idea, which is that the fossil fuel industry has five times more carbon in its reserves than the world can safely burn.

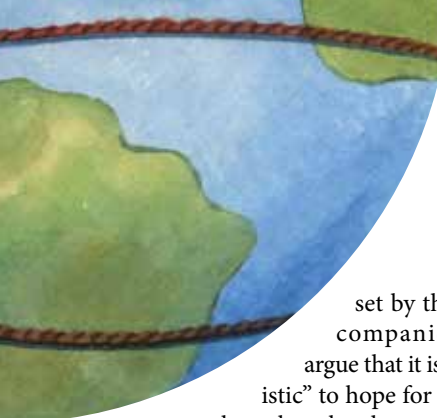
And while all this is happening—while the movement is doing its best to slow down and stall the fossil industry—something else is happening too. The engineers are doing their implacable best to bring down the price of renewable energy. It turns out their best is pretty good: Since Copenhagen, the cost of a solar panel has dropped 75 percent. We're now at the point where the cheapest way to generate electricity is to point a panel at the sun.

Knowing that, I'm willing to say that Paris is not going to end like Copenhagen. There's going to be an agreement of some kind. Or rather, less an agreement than a series of promises by individual countries. The Chinese have stopped insisting that they don't need to do anything because they're poor: They've begun to take fairly dramatic steps to change their energy system, embracing the carbon-cap system the U.S. Senate was too scared to even vote on. And Obama has started talking about climate change almost nonstop—and taking some real if modest steps. His plan to crack down on the emissions from coal-fired power plants makes genuine progress. He's been much weaker on limiting supply, but the administration keeps hinting that a decision on the Keystone pipeline will come soon. Should he block that before Paris, then U.S. will go to the talks with real credibility.

The beginning of the end of fossil fuel

None of which is to say the battle is won. It would be truer to say that we've reached the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel age. The question now is how fast that end will go. If it drags out for decades—the goal explicitly





set by the big oil companies, who argue that it is “unrealistic” to hope for anything else—then the planet will break.

If we can make it happen at remarkable speed, then we have a chance. Not a chance of stopping global warming, but a chance of damping it down enough that our civilizations can survive.

Here’s an educated guess as to how the playing field will look coming out of Paris:

- There will be a series of promises from various countries to reduce carbon emissions. Those promises—if they’re kept—would be enough to limit global warming to something like 3 degrees Celsius (all figures of this sort are imprecise, with variables piled on top of variables, but they’re as good as we’re going to get).

- There will be a recognition that 3 degrees is too much—even at Copenhagen nations promised they’d limit the eventual temperature increase to two degrees—but there won’t be much idea how to ratchet down the various agreements any further.

- And there will be some financing available for poor countries hoping to leapfrog past coal to renewable energy, but it too won’t be nearly enough to get the job done.

The danger in that scenario is that the pressure for serious action will be relieved: that the world will decide to take a breather for a decade or so and concentrate on its various other troubles while our economic and political systems digest the promises made so far. In practice that would look like a modestly accelerated version of present trends, nothing too disruptive. More solar panels, fewer coal-fired power plants, a steady switch of investment capital toward green energy—but a continued, if eroding, dominance by the big oil companies. That would be a disaster; it would close the window kept barely ajar by these new pledges. We don’t have breathing room on climate change—we have to run ever faster.

Turn off oil, turn on the sun

Which is why I bet the movement will take Paris in stride. We’ll be grateful for the gains

it locks in, but we’ll think of them mostly as a snapshot of where the balance of power lies right now. If 400,000 people in the streets of New York yields 3 degrees, what do we have to do to get to two degrees? And 1.5?

And we’ll keep taking the fight straight at the fossil fuel companies, less concerned than we once were with national governments. We have an ever surer sense of where the real power lies. We’re already laying plans, for instance, for a huge day of resistance come springtime, rallying on the dozen great “carbon bombs” scattered around the globe: the tar sands in Canada and Venezuela, the great coal deposits in Wyoming, Queensland, and Indonesia, the as-yet-untapped pools of oil in the Caspian and the Arctic and off the coast of Brazil. And at the same time we’ll be pushing for the rapid, disruptive spread of renewables in every corner. Bangladesh is on track to have solar power in every village by 2021; if they can do it there, we can do it everywhere. Even Florida.

Our mantra, always, will be faster. Faster. Turn off coal and gas and oil, turn on the sun and wind. Off and on.

And our real goal will be to keep changing the zeitgeist. Because that’s what’s really happened these last few years. Anger at the fossil fuel industry has grown; the sense of possibility for clean energy has grown. And above all what’s grown is the understanding that this crisis is tightly chained to the question of what kind of world we want.

It’s no accident that the pope made climate change the entry into the sprawling radical critique that is *Laudato Si’*. Because in the end, as much as global warming represents an overpowering threat, it also represents a last-ditch opportunity.

It’s clear now what our current way of doing business means: It means the radical concentration of power and wealth in a few hands, derived from the radical concentration of carbon in the atmosphere. The opposite is the radical distribution of power—literal power in the form of electrons, but also political and economic power—to the rest of us, on every corner of this planet. If we can do it fast enough, it will be a planet worth having! ■

Bill McKibben, a Sojourners contributing editor, is the Schumann Distinguished Scholar at Middlebury College in Vermont and founder of 350.org.

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The author, left, and her sister with their mother shortly before they moved from South Korea to Canada; the necklace the author has kept since childhood.

STRANGERS in a Strange Land

The God of the Bible often works through “outsider” women.

by GRACE JI-SUN KIM

MY FAMILY EMIGRATED from South Korea to Canada in 1975 when my sister and I were 6 and 5 years old, respectively. Before I left Korea, I had no idea where Canada was. With our mother, we boarded a plane that took us to Hawaii, then Alaska, and finally Toronto.

Korean was the only language I had ever spoken. I assumed that everyone spoke Korean. I had no idea what people were saying when I arrived in Toronto. My uncle in Korea gave my sister and me each a cute little necklace to wear with our name, address, and phone number written on the back of it. It was a round red necklace with a picture of an adorable puppy. We wore it around our necks on the plane so that if we got lost, we could more easily ask for help to find our way home.

After 40 years of carrying the necklace with me as I moved from place to place, my children threw it into the garbage last year as they were doing spring cleaning. They thought it was a piece of junk. It may look like junk, but to me it provides a special reminder of my childhood, family, and the home from which I emigrated. Luckily, I liberated it from the garbage before trash day. Now I keep it safe as one of my prized possessions, one of the few things I have left from Korea and from my childhood.

My necklace reminds me from where I have come, what I have experienced, and what I have endured. As my necklace has survived all the moving and tossing around

in my life, I too will survive.

As an immigrant family, we had few earthly possessions. We lived in a two-bedroom, cockroach-infested apartment. I had only one little hand-me-down toy doll that someone passed on to me rather than throwing into the trash. My library consisted of a few books that I read over and over. My parents had one car, and they worked different shifts, so they were rarely home at the same time. There was no car at home to drive us to the library to sign out books. After awhile I allowed my creativity to run wild and made up imaginary stories based on the pictures in the few books we had.

I did not complain too much for having so little, as I knew it was difficult for my parents to find jobs in Canada with their limited English and work experience. The jobs that they had were minimum-wage jobs. This meant that there was no extra money to splurge or take trips. So with a simple life and with lots of hand-me-down clothes, I did the best that I could at school. I excelled.

In the early grades, when I could not speak English, I still understood that my classmates were making fun of me. My clothes never fit right. They were either too big and loose or too small, and they were usually a decade old. They were definitely out of style. Children mocked me for the way I looked. And not just because of my clothes.

They mocked me because I was Korean. I have small eyes, a flat nose, and yellow skin,

Kim family photos

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which made me look different from the white kids in school. I still remember the schoolyard chants of “ching chong, ching chong,” a racial slur directed at me or another of my Korean immigrant classmates. They never tired of asking me, “Where are you from?” I told them “Korea.” But they kept saying “Chinese, Japanese,” with their fingers pressing their eyes to slant up and down to mock my Asian eyes. They kept repeating “Chinese, Japanese” as if they could not hear me say I am Korean.

It was a painful time of trying to hide who I was and my Korean heritage. I did not speak Korean in public, and I tried to not look Korean, as if that were possible. But I tried, as did some of the other Korean immigrant children—girls put scotch tape over

students and scholars think that only “white men” do “real theology” and what I am doing doesn’t count as “real theology.” I am often blamed for things that go wrong, as I am an easy scapegoat. Korean-American women are viewed as passive and obedient. This distorted imagery is often portrayed in our culture, such as in musicals like *Miss Saigon* that portray a docile, obedient woman as the love object of a white male GI. Therefore they become easy targets of discrimination and subordination.

Asian Americans are viewed as perpetual foreigners, no matter how many generations a family has lived in a U.S. community. Even fifth-generation Chinese and Japanese Americans are often viewed with suspicion and treated as foreigners and are not accepted as “Americans.” This perpetual-foreigner understanding allowed the internment of Japanese Americans in World War II. The Italian Americans

and the German Americans were never interned on the same scale, even though the U.S. was at war with both of those countries.

For white Europeans, it was easier to become assimilated and be viewed as an American, while it was difficult for the dominant society to truly accept Japanese Americans as Americans. They were viewed as foreigners during the internment, and they—along with other Asian Americans—are viewed as foreigners today.

THE BIBLE INCLUDES stories of foreigners and foreign women. In many instances foreign women were not welcomed and were told to leave the community. In Ezra 9, the foreign women were cast away. They were blamed for societal ills.

In her essay “Ethnicity, Exogamy, and Zipporah,” Karen Strand Winslow notes: “The Exodus account of Moses’ Midianite wife illustrates how this and similar traditions about ‘outsider’ wives were useful against those who claimed that only *golah* (exiled) Jews—male and female—and their offspring were truly people of Israel, the holy seed. The protagonists in the book of Ezra (Shecaniah and Ezra) contended that unions of male *golah* Jews with women originating inside the land produced mixed, polluted offspring who had to be expelled

As God's children we celebrate our differences, which enrich our lives and our society.

their eyes to make a double eyelid fold. Some dyed their black hair to a lighter brown or blond. Others tried to dissociate themselves from their Korean culture.

To the children in the schoolyard, I was a “foreigner.” I was not one of them. I was an alien to them.

TODAY, LIVING in the U.S., I am still viewed as a foreigner. I have advanced degrees. I am a professor. I am trilingual. But I am still often viewed as a foreigner who does not belong in North America.

I am often asked, “Are you comfortable speaking in English?” When visiting in the hospital, I am asked, “Do you speak English?”

I often speak to my children in Korean. I used to hate it when my parents did this to me when I was a child, but now I am grateful as this prevented me from losing my Korean. My children do not mind. They respond to me most of the time. However, if others hear me speaking in Korean in public, they automatically assume I am a foreigner and that I cannot speak English. This happens to me quite frequently as people assume that I cannot understand them and give me glaring stares.

I am often viewed with suspicion even as I do my own scholarship in theology. Some

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The author today, left, with her sister, Hee Sun Karen Kim.

from the *golah* congregation. However, the stories of Zipporah—and other outsider wives or mothers such as Tamar, Asenath, the Cushite, and Ruth—indicate otherwise. These narratives show that foreign wives were essential to the formation, preservation, and deliverance of the people of Israel.”

It is intriguing to notice that, in a patriarchal culture where lineage is important, the insider women were always barren until the Lord opened their wombs. As Strand Winslow writes, barrenness was never a problem for the outsiders such as Hagar, Tamar, Asenath, and Zipporah.

Childbirth was often a sign of a blessing from God. If this is so, then God blessed the outsider women and gave them many children. Many of Israel’s ancient leaders were born through outsider women. It is through these outsider women that even Jesus’ lineage came to be. God uses everybody, and all people are important and precious in God’s sight. Intolerance and valuing different people differently prevented people in Israel from welcoming the outsider women or their offspring such as Ishmael. The Bible draws contrast to reveal deeper meaning and understanding to us. The examples of the foreign women provoke us to redraw boundaries that divide foreign and native.

OUR HUMAN FEAR and ignorance often prevent us from welcoming and accepting those who are seen as the “Other.” In a society that too often judges people by their looks or culture, and treats people as inside people or outside people, Jesus calls us to accept everyone as equal and as members of the family of God.

When we look at the story of Jesus and the outsider Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), we see that Jesus does not ignore her. Rather, Jesus engages her and asks for a

drink of water. He begins a lively conversation with the Samaritan woman that ends with her leaving her water jar and returning to the city. She says to the people, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” (John 4:29).

There is a spiritual embrace between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. This spiritual action begs us to live our lives more lovingly and more spiritually. Jesus calls us to embrace those who are different from us. Jesus invites us to accept those who speak differently, look differently, and think differently. Jesus frees us to see people not as “foreigners,” but rather as our neighbors and fellow humans.

As a mother of three children, I worry about how their peers view them as foreigners and as the Other. They have had their own share of discrimination and racism, as they are among the few Asian-American children in their schools. We need to work so that our children and our children’s children are welcomed and embraced.

We are all God’s children. As God’s children we celebrate our differences, which enrich our lives and our society. We welcome the diversity created and gifted to us by a God of love, embrace, and Spirit.

“God took the first step to embrace us. We ought to follow that example by taking the first step to embrace the Other,” I wrote in *Embracing the Other*. “The Spirit of God that dances in our lives—connecting us, challenging us, and comforting us—asks us to treat those who are different as ourselves. The Spirit of God teaches us to join the divine dance of love.” ■

Grace Ji-Sun Kim, author of nine books, most recently Embracing the Other: The Transformative Spirit of Love (Eerdmans, 2015), is an associate professor of theology at Earlham School of Religion. Kim (gracejisun.kim.wordpress.com) blogs regularly for The Huffington Post.

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A Better Monk Would Know

An essay on how we live the lives we choose • by BRIAN DOYLE

I WAS IN A MONASTERY the other day and got to talking to a monk who, when I asked him why he was a monk, why he volunteered for a job liable to loneliness, a commitment to an idea no one can ever prove or document, a task that entails years of labor in the belief that somehow washing dishes and cutting grass and listening to pain and chanting in chapel matters in the long scheme of things, said, because it's hard.

I was startled; sure I was. You would be, too. Rarely do people say with a grin that they do something because it is hard to do it. But he said it again, still smiling, and then he talked about it for a while, haltingly at first, as he felt for the words, and then with a lovely flow, like something let loose from a dam after a long time pooling behind the dam.

Because I am not sure I can do it at all, let alone do it well, and do it for years and years, perhaps for my whole life, he said. I cannot think that way. I try to be a good monk for a week at a time. Walking helps greatly, I find. Also birds. We have a resident heron here who has been a great help to me. Sometimes he or she is right there by the reeds when I am in pressing need of a heron. I have come to think that the birds are shards of faith themselves in mysterious ways. You could spend a whole life contemplating birds and never come to the end of the amazing things they do. There are many swallows here and I spend hours at a time watching them conduct their intricate maneuvers. They have the loveliest gentle chitter with which they speak to each other in the air. Remarkable creatures altogether. When I was first a monk I was of a mind to adopt one as a pet, and I actually got a ladder and climbed to one of their nests, but when I loomed into view there, surely a great horror to the parents and the young ones, I could not find it in myself to reach in and steal a child. I went back down the ladder and went to the chapel.

I want to be a monk because I think that would be a very good use of me, he continued. Does that sound strange? It sounds a bit arrogant, I suppose. I don't mean to be arrogant. I want to be an implement. Something like a shovel with a beard. If I live with humility and intent, if I do what I do well and gracefully, that is good. Beyond that I cannot go. When I speak to children they will ask me things like, if I do enough good, and other people do good, then the good stacks up, right? And the good eventually beats

the bad, right? And I cannot say this is so. I am not very interested in speculation about such things. I was never interested in theology. I think theology is an attempt to make sense of that to which sense does not apply. I cannot explain why I hope that what I do matters; all I can do is do what I do, either well or ill, patiently or not, gracefully or not. And I do find that doing things mindfully, patiently, easefully, makes the task far more interesting. I love to cut the grass here, for I sometimes come to a sort of understanding with the grass, and the hill, and the creatures in the grass, and with my legs and arms and back, a sort of silent conversation in which we all communicate easily and thoroughly. Do you have any idea of what I mean with all this?

I think I do, I said. I have children and a fascinating graceful mysterious wife and sometimes we are like five fingers in a hand. And sometimes when I write, that happens, that the page and my fingers and my dreams are all the same thing for an hour. I always emerge startled.

Yes, he said, yes, that is why I am a monk. I thought perhaps I could add to that larger music, by being a monk. I might have held almost any job, I suppose, been any sort of man—I was very lucky in life, and had a wonderful childhood, and education, and I loved women, and they loved me, and I might have been happy and fulfilled in a dozen ways. But I knew inside that I had to try to do what was hard for me to do, to be of best use.

That's well said, I said.

Then perhaps I was a good monk during the saying of it, he said, smiling again. And now I must be off. Perhaps my best use for the last few minutes was to talk to you; and now my work is certainly to clean the kitchen, for it is Wednesday, and it is my job to make the kitchen shine. Come down a little early tomorrow, before everyone else is up, and see if I have been a good monk for the next couple of hours. Sleep well. The birds begin to sing at about four in the morning. It is my belief that the warblers are first but I could be wrong. A better monk would know, but I am not yet a good monk in that area, though I have hopes. ■

Brian Doyle is the editor of Portland Magazine at the University of Portland (Ore.) and the author most recently of How the Light Gets In.

If I do enough good, and other people do good, then the good stacks up, right?

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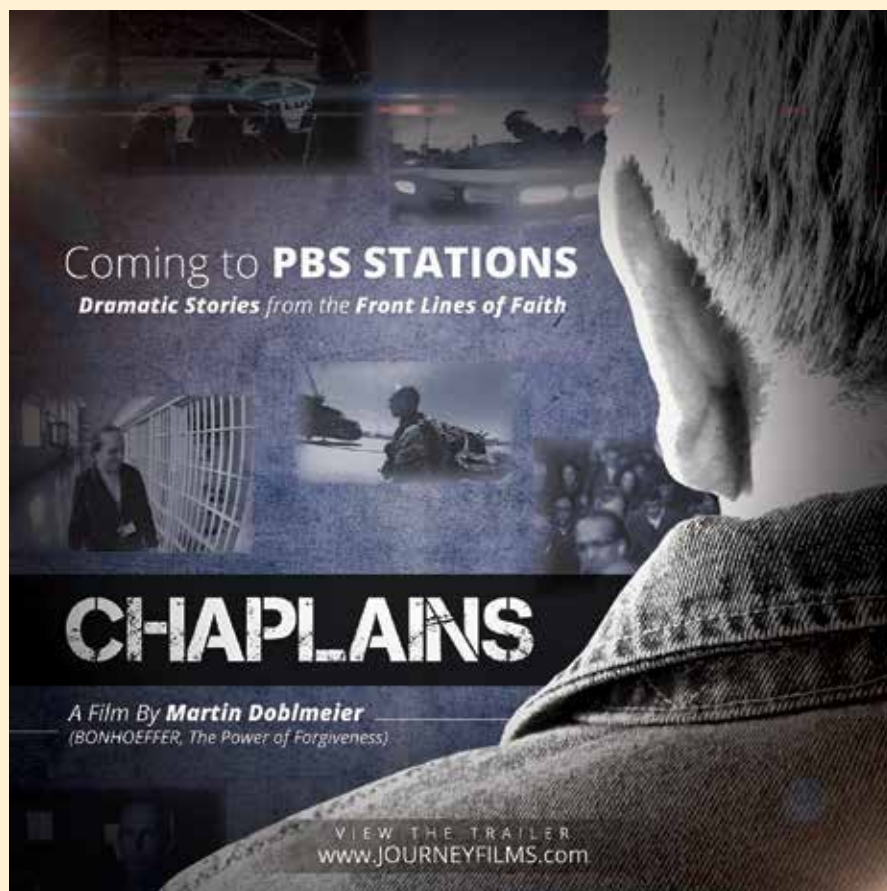
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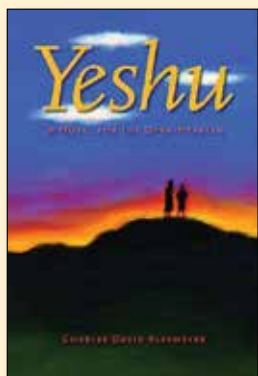
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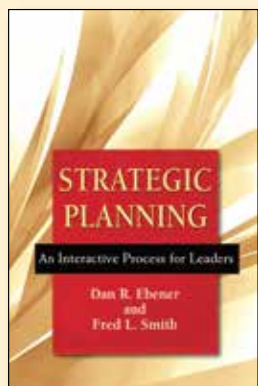
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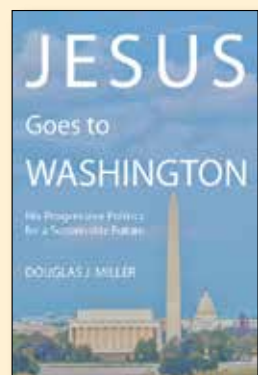
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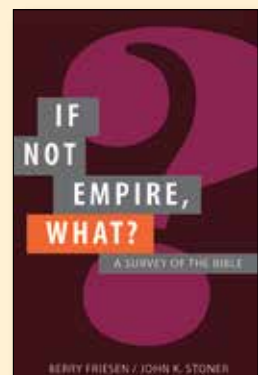
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By Brandon Wrencher

The Myth of **Reconciliation?**

White supremacy, black power, and the hard road to justice

#BLACKLIVESMATTER is being touted as our uniquely contemporary civil rights movement. Yet it bears striking resemblance to the black power movement of decades past.

Who can represent #BlackLivesMatter, be involved, or be its leaders? It's clear that black people can. Can others? And what sorts of black folks? Ben Carson? Cornel West? Two of the three co-founders are queer black women. And what about the role of the faith community, of clergy? The movement's incredible racial justice work notwithstanding, it puts on display the identity politics that continue to complicate the body politic in contemporary American life.

Jennifer Harvey's *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation* (Eerdmans) is one of the most significant recent books addressing identity and politics, focusing on the intersections of race, anti-racism, and religion. In its pages, Harvey, an American Baptist minister and associate professor of religion at Drake University, deconstructs reconciliation as a paradigm and offers a constructive practical vision of reparations. Harvey's work in trying to make sense of her own embodied white identity—through her studies at Union Theological Seminary and service in a host of ministry settings addressing racial justice—provides background that allows her to explore multiple racial justice issues,

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42 America's Blood Sport
Danny Duncan Collum on the NFL's *Concussion* problem

44 With Strings Attached
Rosemary Radford Ruether reviews Brueggemann's *Chosen?*

45 Coming Alive
C. Christopher Smith on *Reclaiming Conversation*

students have a positive and supportive response for African-American students, interpreting this as a demonstration of community pride. But the students respond with disapproval of such an activity among white students, associating it with white supremacy or the KKK. This exercise exposes the incoherence of our understanding of reconciliation-as-diversity. As Harvey explains, our racial identities are not parallel, and so inclusion cannot be the main focus in addressing structural injustices.

Harvey credits Christian Community Development Association founder John Perkins for having one of the more consistent visions of reconciliation. Within CCDAs

Reconciliation as a paradigm has failed to address racial injustice in the U.S.

three Rs, reconciliation is only possible to the extent that relocation and redistribution of wealth are realized. CCDA is an exception, and even within these prophetic evangelical circles, lament about racial division dominates discourse about race work. Harvey invites us to put a moratorium on talk about reconciliation that assumes that to reach its vision of togetherness all races have the same ethical responsibility in cultivating trust. A reconciliation paradigm doesn't clearly challenge us to emphasize that we may all need to do racial justice work, but we do it differently, based on particular histories and material conditions.

For white folks this means that there's no way to address their racial identity apart from addressing white supremacy. What is so dangerous about white supremacy is that it can be rendered invisible when white people are silent about or trivialize whiteness. Harvey defines whiteness as the "particular problem of white people's unique relationship as perpetrators and beneficiaries to supremacist racial structures. ... [It] is also larger and more powerful than the individual white person, having taken on a life of its own." A reparations paradigm not only entails the naming of whiteness but also demands white moral agency through repair, reimbursement, and repentance for racial injustice.

Harvey situates her reparations paradigm

Continued on Page 43

making her book relevant for an intercultural audience.

Harvey's thesis is clear: Reconciliation as a paradigm has failed to address racial injustice in the U.S., and the church needs to shift to a reparations paradigm to better address our racial situation. In a reconciliation paradigm, racial *separation* denotes racism, making diversity and togetherness the primary criteria for determining racial righteousness in the church. Issues related to structural justice are significant within visions of reconciliation, but they take a back seat to the ultimate concern of inclusion.

Harvey often asks students: What would be the difference in their responses to seeing a group of African-American students walking across campus, carrying signs that stated "Black is Beautiful" versus white students carrying signs that stated "White is Beautiful"? Almost universally Harvey's

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Sing along about freedom, communal joy, and what "Home" feels like with the indie folk artists Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros. Proceeds from their new 21-song live album, *Live In No Particular Order: 2009-2014* will benefit their nonprofit Big Sun Foundation, which supports sustainable communities. Community Music

PICTURING HISTORY

And Still I Rise: Black America Since MLK is a photo-rich chronology of the past 50 years of African-American life. Written and compiled by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Kevin M. Burke, this is a companion volume to a PBS series of the same name to air in 2016. Ecco

America's Blood Sport

BASEBALL USED to be our national pastime. But now professional football is America's game. And why not? It's a violent, capital-intensive spectacle carried on with reckless disregard for human health and safety. Kind of like our foreign policy, or our criminal justice system.

Last fall, 45 of the 50 most-watched TV shows were National Football League games. It is the most profitable of the major sports. The average NFL franchise brings in \$286 million per year, compared to \$237 million for Major League Baseball—despite baseball's 162-game regular season vs. football's 16.

This year the TV audiences for football are expected to grow, and NFL total revenue is expected to top \$12 billion. Nothing seems to put a dent in the U.S. enthusiasm for the game. Some coaches have offered cash rewards for the injury of opposing players. Multiple players face charges for violent crimes. The

The NFL may have even more power than Big Tobacco once had.

Patriots cheat in the playoffs. And the game just gets more popular.

Maybe that will change this Christmas when the movie *Concussion*, featuring Will Smith and Alec Baldwin, is scheduled to be released by Sony Pictures. *Concussion* tells the story of Dr. Bennet Omalu, the Pittsburgh forensic pathologist who discovered the decisive link between repeated minor head trauma—such as from huge men crashing into each other dozens of times a day—and the bewildering array of mental illnesses that afflicts many NFL retirees.

Omalu's story, detailed in a 2009 GQ article by Jeanne Marie Laskas upon which the film is based, is a classic David and Goliath tale. In 2002, Omalu, an immigrant from Nigeria,



was working at the county coroner's office when he became obsessed with the brain of Mike Webster, a former Pittsburgh Steeler who died at age 50 after decades of debilitating mental illness. Eventually Omalu's findings were published in the journal *Neurosurgery* in an article titled "Chronic traumatic encephalopathy in a National Football League player."

The NFL went after Omalu hammer and tong and any other scientist (even the older and whiter ones) who endorsed his findings. The league's strategy seemed modeled on that of the tobacco companies, which maintained for three decades that there was no definitive link between cigarette smoking and lung cancer.

People who saw early cuts of *Concussion* came out comparing it favorably to *The Insider*, the 1999 film about a tobacco whistleblower. But the NFL may have even more power than Big Tobacco once had.

A Sept. 1 *New York Times* story cited emails (released by last year's hack of the Sony computer system) indicating that Sony took some of the "bite" out of the film in response to complaints from the NFL. Still,

the movie is bound to force some to reconsider the sport. They may not stop watching the games on TV, but they may think twice about letting their children play football. And the NFL knows that will be the first step in the sport's inevitable decline.

We've always had an anti-NFL policy in my family. We've generally not watched any pro games except the Super Bowl. And when one of our sons really wanted to play football in the local park league, we flatly refused. Because even before the science emerged, I knew from experience that banging young heads into each other was a bad idea. If I were ever tempted to waver, a deep scar on the bridge of my nose reminds me. It marks the spot where, as a high school offensive lineman, my helmet used to slide down onto my nose whenever I launched myself, forehead-first, into the chest of another player.

That shouldn't happen to anybody's child, at any age. ■

Danny Duncan Collum teaches writing at Kentucky State University in Frankfort. He is the author of the novel *White Boy*.



Continued from Page 41

in the black power movement of the late 1960s and '70s, contending that a return to this historical period is the key to unlocking a more racially just future. The movement, radically embraced by much of the black church at the time, said "no" to integration and visions of diversity. The problem of the "color line" in America was power, not segregation and separateness. Specifically, the "Black Manifesto" prepared by civil rights leader James Forman and adopted by the National Black Economic Development Conference in 1969 confronted white power and white supremacy by demanding financial reparations from white churches and synagogues for black enslavement and oppression—leading to its overwhelming rejection by white Christians.

HARVEY'S CRITIQUE of reconciliation focuses on the politico-economic structural failures of whiteness, which she believes a black power reparation paradigm addresses. She leaves the aesthetic-structural dimension of whiteness virtually unaddressed, a dimension that reconciliation paradigms have sought to unmask, even if unsuccessfully (as Harvey illustrates throughout the book). The expansive and elusive power of whiteness is found in the intersections of these different structural dimensions. Harvey's book is confident in black power and reparations as paradigm-shifters for future racial righteousness, but this may be a shortcoming because of their potential of actually reinforcing whiteness.

Harvey gives the reparations paradigm contemporary practical relevance. She contends that it has broad application beyond black-white racial issues—that it is adaptable to diverse settings of racial injustice. Harvey applies the paradigm to several issues, including environmental racism and land-rights struggles among Native Americans, immigration, and mass incarceration. Racial groups can do justice work on systems and environments immediately, right where they are, without having to wait for others to show up. Careful to note that she is not advocating a separationist model, Harvey emphasizes that it is essential that all people—wherever they are—engage in anti-racism work. This challenges a common excuse made by white folks when they are silent or uninvolved on



From
The Walk

A STEP INTO BEAUTY

WHEN I FIRST saw the DeLorean rush toward me at the end of *Back to the Future*, I was 11 years old, and I felt alive in a way that I'm not sure I had experienced before. The endings of the films of Robert Zemeckis would continue to give me that rush of good feeling—Tom Hanks at the crossroads in *Cast Away*, and on the tree stump waiting for his little son to come home from school in *Forrest Gump*; Denzel Washington faced with the question "Who are you?" in *Flight*. Some critics, believing that things need to be difficult in order for them to be good, find it easy to turn down a Zemeckis invitation. I beg to differ—there's no contradiction in loving the populist sentiment of *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, the serious melodrama of *The Elephant Man*, the painful and non-linear narrative of *Exotica*, the surreal plunge into the human shadow of *Enter the Void*, and the high art intellectual sensibilities of *Eternity and a Day*. And those are just a handful of very different films beginning with the letter "E." Authenticity is what matters, not how "elite" the work can appear to be.

Zemeckis makes large-scale populist entertainment that makes us laugh and cry, but he deals in authenticity. Along with the fun and the flights (Forrest running across the U.S., Marty McFly and Doc Brown's race to connect the wires

with the clock tower, and two of the most harrowing plane crashes in the movies), emotional beats are earned, characters behave as they might in real life (even if they are in a time-traveling sports car or abandoned on an island), and audiences get the chance to wrestle with the same question faced by Denzel: Who am I?

Zemeckis gets at this question perhaps more than ever in the charming, exciting, and even profound *The Walk*, which relates in intricate detail and huge scale the amazing 1974 tightrope crossing between the World Trade Center towers by the high-wire artist Philippe Petit. Fear of heights, for Petit, is fear of life—the authentic answer to "Who am I?" is "A little lower than the angels." Petit's coup ended up serving as an icon through which healing might make itself known. In mid-air, he invented an image that could heal the future. *The Walk* honors the suffering of 9/11 but invokes the hope that stepping into beauty will save the world. It's a lament for what was lost, but unlike so many other attempts, it is not triumphalist. Instead, it allows an outsider—a Frenchman at that!—to redeem space itself. ■

Gareth Higgins (garethhiggins.net) is a northern Irish writer based in North Carolina.

racial justice matters, claiming it is because persons of color are not leading or present.

It is rare to find anti-racism discourses by white folks that engage history and structures, and that listen with respect to black voices that are usually seen as “radical” within most white spaces. Harvey presents a compelling case that “reparations work” has the capacity to overcome the impass and shallowness that “reconciliation work” has created, and make significant material and structural changes that produce deeply meaningful and just interracial relationships along the journey. *Dear White Christians* addresses whiteness head-on and tells the too-often-ignored story of black power. Though not unique in its critique, it might be one of the clearest and most succinct diagnoses of the inadequacies of the popular reconciliation paradigm. ■

Brandon Wrencher, pastor of Blackburns’ Chapel United Methodist Church in Todd, N.C., is a Th.M. student at Duke Divinity School, researching the intersections of identity, otherness, and Christian theology.

ADDITIONAL READING

... on racial identity, religion, and culture

The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race, by Willie James Jennings (Yale University Press)

Race: A Theological Account, by J. Kameron Carter (Oxford University Press)

Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being, by M. Shawn Copeland (Fortress Press)

We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity, by Tommie Shelby (Belknap Press)

Beyond Ontological Blackness: An Essay on African American Religious and Cultural Criticism, by Victor Anderson (Continuum)

Creative Exchange: A Constructive Theology of African American Religious Experience, by Victor Anderson (Fortress Press) —BW

Reviewed by Rosemary Radford Ruether

WITH STRINGS ATTACHED

Chosen?: Reading the Bible amid the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, by Walter Brueggemann, Westminster John Knox Press.

WALTER BRUEGGEMANN is a leading authority of Old Testament interpretation and author of more than two dozen books. In this book he seeks to make a contribution to the application of biblical concepts of God’s chosen people and the promised land in the light of the contemporary Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This book is slim, focused on the social justice issues and the relevance of key readings of Hebrew scripture to this conflict. It is written to be a manual for group discussions, particularly by Christian groups in churches. Brueggemann focuses on three main themes and their roots in scripture: the meaning of the “God’s chosen people,” the donation of the “holy land” to the “chosen people,” and the relation of Zion and Israel.

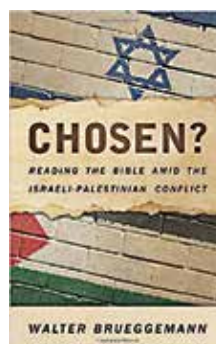
The “chosen people” are chosen by God as an arbitrary decision, writes Brueggemann, not based on any superiority of that people to others, but only on God’s love for them. It is an unconditional decision by God to choose this people with whom to have a special relationship. Yet this idea evolves in Israel’s history. There develops the theme that the people of Israel will be held especially accountable by God because of this relationship and punished for their iniquities (Amos 3:2). Isaiah suggests that, in a redemptive future, Egypt and Assyria will be chosen alongside Israel as a “blessing in

the midst of the earth” (Isaiah 19:24-25).

Later heirs of the biblical tradition interpreted the idea of the chosen people to apply to themselves. Some in the Christian church saw itself as inheriting the status of God’s chosen people. Some in the United States regard this nation as a chosen people, occupying a new “promised land.”

Hebrew scripture also develops the belief that strings are attached to God’s gift of the holy land: God’s people must do what is right; they must obey God’s commandments. Otherwise they may lose the land and be forced into exile. But scripture also makes clear that inhabiting the land is not necessary for Israel’s identity—God’s people can and must obey God’s commandments anywhere. God’s people and commandments are thus universalized, a claim that conflicts theologically with modern Zionist views that residence in the “holy land” is necessary for Israel’s fulfillment.

This is a topic of great delicacy, given the global implications and history of this conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestinian people in the land of Israel/Palestine. Brueggemann has been a supporter of the rights of Jews to a homeland in Israel, given the history of anti-Semitism in Christianity. But due to the evolution of the State of Israel into a military power with nuclear weapons and the oppression of the Palestinian people, he now calls for



STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION (Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)
1. Title of Publication: Sojourners. 2. Publication No: 0364-2097. 3. Date of filing: Sept. 29, 2015. 4. Frequency of issue: Monthly. 5. Number of issues published annually: Eleven (11). 6. Annual subscription price: \$39.95. 7. Location of known office of publication: 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. 8. Same. 9. Publisher—Cynthia J. Martens, 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Editor—James D. Rice, same address. 10. Owner: Sojourners, 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. 11. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other securities: None. 12. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes have not changed during the preceding 12 months. 13. Publication title: Sojourners. 14. Issue date for circulation data below: September-October 2015. 15. Extent and nature of circulation: paid subscriptions, U.S. and international, newsstand, and single copy sales. The average number of copies of each issue during the preceding 12 months: A. Total number of copies printed (net press run)—28,522. B.1. Paid and/or requested circulation: Outside-county mail subscriptions including advertiser’s proof and exchange copies—25,324. B.2. Paid in-county subscriptions—0. B.3. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other non-USPS paid distribution—195. B.4. Other classes mailed through the USPS—91. C. Total paid distribution—25,610. D.1. Free distribution by mail: Outside-county—0. D.2. In-county—0. D.3. Other classes mailed through the USPS—457. D.4. Free distribution outside the mail—390. E. Total free distribution—1,939. F. Total distribution: 27,549. G. Copies not distributed—974. H. Total—28,522. I. Percent paid—93%. The actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: A. 27,514. B.1. 25,089. B.2. 0. B.3. 260. B.4. 96. C. 25,445. D.1. 0. D.2. 0. D.3. 530. D.4. 1,482. E. 920. F. 26,365. G. 1,149. H. 27,514. I. 97%. 16. Electronic Copy Circulation: paid electronic circulation. The average of each issue during the preceding 12 months: A. Total number of electronic copies—452. B. Total paid print copies plus paid electronic copies—26,062. C. Total print distribution plus electronic copies—28,001. D. Percent paid—93%. The actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: A. 396. B. 25,841. C. 26,761. D. 97%. 17. Publication of Statement of Ownership: December 2015. 18. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Cynthia J. Martens, Publisher.

a revision of this view: Both the Israelis and the Palestinians have rights to the land. There must be a new development in which the land is shared.

This scriptural exposition by Brueggemann is supplemented by a study guide with suggestions for group discussion. This is a book aimed at contributing to

current understanding in the churches of these themes in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. ■

Rosemary Radford Ruether is a visiting professor of feminist theology at Claremont School of Theology. She is the author of 46 books.

Reviewed by C. Christopher Smith

COMING ALIVE

***Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*, by Sherry Turkle.**
Penguin Press.

THE GLORY OF God is humanity fully alive, to paraphrase St. Irenaeus.

If Irenaeus is correct and Christian discipleship is centered on following Jesus toward a life that is more compassionate and more alive, then Sherry Turkle's new book, *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*, is perhaps the most important Christian book of 2015. Granted, Turkle steers clear of the language of faith, but in calling us to become more fully human, she has penned a profoundly religious book that Christians need to read and reflect upon.

Western culture has long been losing the capacity for conversation. Embodied in the current partisan climate of Washington that competes at all costs, rather than converse and collaborate, this aversion to dialogue is symptomatic of cultural changes that have unfolded over the last 500 years. From Enlightenment philosophy to industrialization to automobilization, these cultural shifts have disintegrated communities and diminished our capacity for open conversation. More recently, Bill Bishop's 2008 book *The Big Sort* highlighted how the increasing homogeneity of our relational networks erodes our capacity to converse with those who differ from us.

Turkle focuses primarily on an even more recent concern, the ubiquitous tyranny of the smartphone. Although not a Luddite who would advocate abolishing phones, Turkle fiercely describes the ways our phones inhibit our capacity for connection, conversation, and empathy. "We are being silenced by our technologies," she

maintains. With joint Harvard doctorates in sociology and psychology, Turkle backs her claims with a vast body of research. Even a silenced phone sitting on the table during conversation, she notes, changes the dynamics of what we discuss and how.

Face-to-face conversation, Turkle argues, is the most basic human activity. In conversation, we learn to listen and to be empathetic. Our mobile devices also impede our capacity for solitude, a skill that is vital to our development from childhood onward. Turkle emphasizes that it is in solitude that

our minds are formed and we develop a distinctive voice. In exercising this voice in private conversations with family, friends, and lovers, and in public conversations, it is refined and our capacity for solitude and self-reflection is further enhanced, drawing us ever-deeper in this virtuous cycle.

In the final chapters of this hefty volume, Turkle turns to how we are to reclaim conver-

sation. Her numerous suggestions—including "put away your phone," "slow down," "talk to people with whom you don't agree"—have a ring of common sense, and yet they cut against the grain of our technological society. I certainly have been challenged about the incessant use of my smartphone, and I am reconsidering how to use it in ways that do not inhibit conversation.

While *Reclaiming Conversation* will challenge us to reconsider our personal habits and practices, we would also do well to read and reflect on it in our churches, considering how we can create gracious spaces in

our life together for practicing and reclaiming conversation. All too often our churches get swept up in the consumerism and religious techniques of our day, and don't take the time to help cultivate basic practices such as conversation that are essential to human life and flourishing. The journey deeper into the art of conversation could awaken vibrant life in our congregations and neighborhoods. Sherry Turkle is exactly the sort of guide that we need for this adventure. ■

C. Christopher Smith is editor of The Englewood Review of Books and co-author of Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus. His next book is Reading for the Common Good: How Books Help Our Churches and Neighborhoods Flourish (IVP Books, 2016).

Reviewed by Tommy Airey

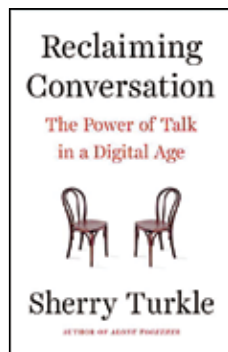
THE BIBLICAL CASE FOR RESISTANCE

***Messianism Against Christology: Resistance Movements, Folk Arts, and Empire*, by James W. Perkinson.** Palgrave.

GROWING UP conservative, white, suburban, and evangelical in North America, for me nothing was more important than the Bible and Jesus. Yet like many, I have grown out of evangelicalism—not because the Bible and Jesus are no longer important, but because the "Bible answer men" have used their interpretations to justify nonsense all over the globe.

James W. Perkinson's *Messianism Against Christology* is an important contribution to the Bible and Jesus reclamation project of post-evangelicals, poets, and prophets. This work delves into "the deep past" of cultures and scriptures, but begins and ends in current-day Detroit (a city where imperialism and resistance face off daily). Perkinson reads this cityscape and riffs on an alternative future glimpsed in urban folk art, hip-hop, and "rewilding" abandoned spaces.

Perkinson proclaims that "this work is a reading of the Jesus-event as movement ... and intelligible only to the degree we take such 'movement history' seriously." He takes to task the monopolizing and colonizing "Western messianic complex" and



the corresponding doctrine represented in classic Christology: “[N]o other name has leveraged more conquest, enslavement, and plundering in human history. ... under the spiritual sponsorship of a kind of Logos-delirium, ‘Christ’ has been made the Alpha-Male Author and Great Heavenly Apologist of the End Game of the epoch.”

Perkinson ultimately offers a theological correlate to Daniel Quinn’s *Beyond Civilization*. A truly biblical messianism (as opposed to Christology) is a creative, analytic critique of empire rooted in small communities of nurture and struggle. “What we need to be saved from in such an orientation,” Perkinson writes, “is the imperial pretension to conquer, control, and enslave an entire planet of resources and life forms.”

Perkinson’s own urban roots dispel the myth that those who commit to this messianism against Christology must literally check out of civilization and enter the wild. Perkinson upholds a faith that “will highlight values and recall traditions whose power is rooted in wildlands symbiotics and insist these are central to the struggle for justice in an otherwise settled lifestyle.” It’s more about a shift in mentality and sensibility than about geography.

A white seminary professor in an impoverished African-American city (83 percent black), Perkinson’s commitment to Detroit goes back four decades, when he arrived to experiment in Christian intentional community. He eventually got saved, he says, by black inner-city culture, a powerful incubator for the messianism he has chronicled here. His own spoken-word poetry and activism infuse his academic work.

Reading *Messianism* requires focus and discipline in order to truly drink up the exquisite theological vistas. Ultimately, as Perkinson warns readers, his work is “suggestive,” offering theological “soundings” that demand further work and refining by readers as they faithfully confront their own unique watershed challenges. His is a quest “to catch certain details in a refractory light that opens the doors of inquiry and imagination.” Perkinson refreshingly offers a first word, not the last.

Messianism Against Christology is currently available only in hard cover and listed at \$100. Finally, a book price that matches the blood, sweat, and tears that the author

has poured into it! But few who will benefit from it have the funds to buy it. Here’s hoping a publisher will produce a paperback edition of *Messianism Against Christology* and make an alternative road less traveled more accessible. ■

Tommy Airey, a retired teacher in Detroit and co-editor of RadicalDiscipleship.net, works with St. Peter’s Episcopal Church and We the People of Detroit, an organization struggling for water justice.

Reviewed by Anne Colamosca

A GENTLE LIFE

A Strangeness in My Mind, by Orhan Pamuk. Knopf.

WHILE OTHER Turkish writers choose to live outside the country, Nobel Prize-winning author Orhan Pamuk—except for short periods—still lives in Istanbul, Turkey, in the building where he was raised. It is not exactly a safe, secure life. He has already faced charges for making anti-Turkish remarks regarding the long-denied mass killings of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire during World War I. He fled the country for more than a year until charges were dropped (due in part to pressure from high-profile writers that included Gabriel García Márquez). And since then, numerous other writers and journalists have been arrested by the increasingly authoritarian government.

Pamuk’s newest and ninth novel, *A Strangeness in My Mind*, took him six years to write and release, as he has struggled against conservative forces who call him a “Western stooge.” Like *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, a memoir by Pamuk, *A Strangeness in My Mind* is a double portrait of the main character, Mevlut Karataş, and the city of Istanbul. It is a postmodern fairy tale, a mesmerizing odyssey, a coming-of-age urban fable.

Mevlut is a street vendor who sells a fermented wheat drink, *boza*, which became popular in the days of the Ottoman Empire. Through Mevlut’s prism we become acquainted with a city of 14 million—up an astounding 12 million people since Pamuk was born in 1952. Pamuk has described Mevlut “as a man of immense imagination ... he sees and feels things in the streets that

no one else does.” He is a quietly observant Muslim, modest, shy, and with his own inner sense of holiness and of “strangeness.” Like Pamuk’s own character in *Istanbul*, Mevlut is a lonely dreamer, living outside of the mainstream, caught up in his own imaginary world, often being judged harshly by those around him.

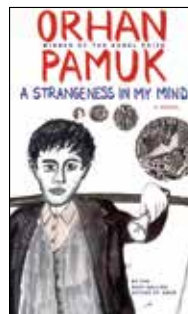
Many years into selling *boza*, Mevlut is invited up into an apartment of drunken, secular Turks who view him as a backward simpleton. “Does your wife wear a headscarf?” they jeer. Hours later, he is robbed of all his money by two street thugs.

Yet in a time when violence and terrorism, buoyed by a brutish government, are everyday realities in Turkey, Pamuk has created a 21st-century folktale (perhaps a gentle rebuke to the government) in which all contemporary problems still exist, but are, at times, superseded by Mevlut’s mystical, inherently religious, connection to life.

A Strangeness in My Mind is ebullience woven with melancholy. Against all odds, Mevlut finds happiness in a wife, Rayiha, whom he had been “tricked” into marrying by a dishonest cousin. Rayiha becomes his soul mate, support system, lover, and mother to his children. And at the end of the folk tale, Mevlut (still poor, still mistreated by relatives) is invited up to another apartment; this time, filled with kind-hearted *boza* customers: “He found that this was not a table of querulous drunks but a group of family and friends delighting in the festivities. He saw loving aunts, gregarious mothers ... He saw all this warmth in the orange light from the living room.”

Despite a high-spirited ending, one must remember that Pamuk chose the title of his newest novel from William Wordsworth’s poem “The Prelude”: “I had melancholy thoughts ... a strangeness in my mind / A feeling that I was not for that hour, / Nor for that place.” And as Pamuk works from his desk overlooking his beloved Bosphorus, one cannot help wonder and worry about what will happen next in the life of this unique Turkish writer. ■

Anne Colamosca is a former staff writer at Business Week and has written for many national magazines and newspapers.



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The Crash of Joy and Sorrow

ONE OF THE BEDROCK assertions of the Christian faith is that the kingdom of God is coming.

Jesus announced God's reign, and embodied it, and brought it among us, but it is not here yet in full. The world's brokenness and our own selfishness are testament enough that the kingdom is not here in full. But it is coming. And there's not a thing we can do to hurry it, or stop it, or even delay it. We can, however, join in with it. That's the best recipe for how to be a human being.

Advent's reliable annual return is like the kingdom in its future certainty. The blue or purple paraments, the hymns in minor key, the candlelight, the longer nights—they all return, annually, like an old friend. Advent is a season of longing. The church places herself in the position of Israel, crying out for a savior. The hymns express this longing ("O Come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lowly exile here"). Some churches have a "longest night" service on or around Dec. 21 for those who have experienced especially acute grief in the past year. Advent reminds us that life is not all cheerfulness, as if we needed reminding. It's also sorrow, longing, waiting, and hoping.



Then Advent returns, ready or not. Just like Jesus and the reign he'll soon bring in full. It'll be here before you know it. And it'll amplify the best parts of human life. It will shear off the worst parts. And it will make the world the one God dreams about.

Jason Byassee holds the Butler chair in homiletics and biblical hermeneutics at the University of British Columbia's Vancouver School of Theology.

[DECEMBER 6]

Competition for Advent

Malachi 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

ADVENT IS A little Lent. As in the great Lent in the spring, here in Advent we deny ourselves, discipline ourselves, and repent of our sins as we prepare spiritually for a terrific joy when God erupts into the world in a howling baby and an empty tomb.

The problem with Advent is that it has competition. Chipper Christmas music—usually suitably cleansed of specific religious content and chock full of chestnuts roasting and wonderful time of the year—starts to pipe into stores in, like, October. Everybody seems to be waiting for something *other* than Jesus: for the end of the semester, family to come home, and vast holiday overconsumption.

These scriptures are like "refiner's fire" or "fullers' soap" for those of us who wait for the wrong thing. Malachi especially screeches into our complacency, demanding that we worship God the way God wants. The danger of focusing on Malachi is to become as frowny faced as we are in our worst selves,

disapproving and judging above all (as I did a little in the last paragraph). Philippians is the perfect antidote. Paul absolutely delights in his Philippian friends. He slobbers all over them. No professional, arm's-length, boundary-respecting distance here. He loves them, and longs for them to have a "harvest of righteousness" on the day of Christ's coming (1:11).

The jewel in the crown of these texts is the Benedictus, as Zechariah's song is traditionally called (Luke 1:68-79). Like all songs, it is best when sung. It announces with past-tense certainty that God has already kept God's promises to Israel. Then it turns to the newly born John the Baptizer and promises God will bring a kingdom, a dawn, a way, full of the loving kindness of God's own heart. That's an awful big promise to hang on one so little. But not nearly as big as the promise about to hang on another little one, born in just a few weeks' time.

What a collision of joy and sorrow this day: sorrow at the way things are; joy at the

world God is bringing. That collision should happen every time we worship. Advent is a reminder to see that both are happening at the same time now and ever in our worship and in each of our hearts.

[DECEMBER 13]

By Ax or Fire

Zephaniah 3:14-20; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18

DON'T LISTEN TO that music director. He or she may be right—people like happy Christmas songs. But hold off. Advent is about longing, not fulfillment. At least not yet. There are Sundays *after* Christmas, you know.

But then these texts seem to tug against me. Zephaniah commands Israel to cry out with joy: God will save the lame and gather the outcast and change all shame to praise. Paul commands the Philippians to rejoice. He would use a text message abbreviation: "srsly." There is no option here—rejoice!—now!

But then John the Baptist's sermon cuts back the other direction: "You brood of vipers!" (If you've ever felt the desire to say this in church, this Sunday gives you biblical sanction.) He promises an ax and fire, he takes away hope of having the right ancestral heritage, and by the end of the reading he is returning to the fire business. John is lunatic-on-the-corner crazy. So why did anybody listen to him?

Because he shows that God reverses everything. In John's time there were big-deal rulers around (Pontius Pilate, Herod, Philip, Lysanias) and serious religious authorities (Caiaphas and Annas), but the word of the Lord didn't come to these guardians and representatives of conquest, political power, religion, and good order. The word came to this zealot in the desert who harangued people.

John's altar call is remarkably gentle. What do we do? John gives tepid requirements indeed—share with those who have no coat or food, don't collect too much tax or extort money, be satisfied with your wages. Really? That's it? That's it, John says. Share. Don't coerce. Be content. Small as they may seem, these are specifically economic priorities that would indeed turn the world upside down—John's and ours.

Try them. Go ahead. And you'll soon find yourself rejoicing and sorrowing, with enemies as powerful as John's and friends as powerful as God and God's beloved poor. Rejoice! For the king of the world is a poor infant, and before him the idols fall and shatter.

[DECEMBER 20]

'God Has a Mom'

Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:46b-55;
Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

TOO MANY GREAT texts for one day! The Magnificat may have inspired more song than any other song in history. And Archbishop Rowan Williams calls Luke 1:39-45, the Visitation, a "conspiracy of hope." Two women visit one another for comfort and joy. Neither is good for what the world says women are good for: having babies. One is too young, the other too old. And yet here they are, a pre-teen and a matriarch in the maternity ward. And no man was necessary for this. Here at the greatest meeting of all time, two women counted worthless in most cultures have their wombs honored not by any man's presence, but by God's. Martin Luther called this text a justification for infant baptism! That seems silly. Until you realize it's not near as silly as a God who gets born.

And so scripture breaks into song. So should we. Micah does—you, Bethlehem, are not the least, for the greatest ruler will be born in you. Mary sings too—a song of victory, more suited to a conquering general than an unmarried Jewish teenager from the sticks facing an unintended pregnancy.

Maybe if Jesus had been clothed in bright neon or Bono's laser-emitting coat, they wouldn't have lost him.

Hebrews sings too—sacrifices, religion, these are not required now, but "a body you have prepared for me," God says (Hebrew 10:5).

A body! You have to have a mom for one of those. And the most significant, distinctive, saving thing we Christians can say about God is this: God has a mom. No one should escape church today without that world-bending thought permanently lodged in

their minds. Now, all who have a mom have a permanent claim on us. To have a mom, to be a body, is to need food, shelter, medicine, warmth, love. We have vast amounts of work to do. But we do it knowing that God has already come into the world as a helpless little one. So we can all dance like a foolish teenager or a pregnant grandmother as we take care of others' bodies and give thanks that they take care of ours too. The king is here. He's God too. And he's cooing from the manger at you.

[DECEMBER 27]

Losing and Finding

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148;
Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

IT TAKES REAL saints to be in church the Sunday after Christmas. On such a "low" Sunday, the preacher's not even here, usually. The throng of visitors is gone. Spirits may be low. The presents are opened, the guests are away—even most of the regulars are—and the ones there are planning the diet they'll promise on Jan. 1 and break Jan. 2.

Joseph and Mary are missing someone important too. But they don't recognize it for a while. Imagine the terror. Most parents have lost sight of their child for a few minutes. They lost theirs for days. And he's the hope of the world. Lost because of them.

Maybe they should have put him in something bright to wear, something that would keep him from being able to hide. These texts have a lot of suggestions about clothes: Samuel wears a linen ephod as he ministers in the temple. It's lovingly made by Hannah, the previously barren one who gave her child to God, who gets to see him once a year, give him a

spectacular present and go home. Colossians suggests that we be clothed with kindness, compassion, humility, and especially with love. Maybe if Jesus had been clothed in bright neon or orange or Bono's laser-emitting coat, they wouldn't have lost him.

Oh—but they would have. We're always losing sight of God. Even when he's the long-promised one, when we're told by an angel

and a miraculous pregnancy that he's God himself, when animals and kings and priests bear witness. Even then we lose him. And we're out of our minds with grief and fear before we find him.

And then the nerve—imagine!—Jesus sasses his mom (I take this from my old parishioner Stephanie Allen, an experienced mom herself). I simply cannot imagine a tone other than a teenager's eye-roll as he says, "Did you not know that I must be here?" Luke even tells us as much, since later Jesus was "obedient to them" (2:51). Yes, God, we lose you all the time. God, couldn't you be a little more obvious and easy to spot?

The answer is no, God cannot. God's way "is so unassuming in the world," as Karl Barth put it. He's hidden even among us, poor and few as we are on a day like today, sinners that we are every day. Ponder this, and stand amazed. ■

"Preaching the Word," Sojourners' online resource for sermon preparation and Bible study, is available at sojo.net/ptw.

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'And Also With You...'

AS A FORMER Baptist child who often mocked Catholic school children for their outfits—which paled against my own fashionable ensemble of striped pants, checked shirt, and flannel hat (with flaps!)—I admit that as an adult I have warmed to the “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” (Did I get that right?) Catholics have better steeples, usually with bells, and cool smoke during worship, and interesting stained glass windows to look at if the homilist lacks conviction, which he often does, compared to the preachers of my youth. They would sweat right through their white suits as they paced back and forth describing the Coming Judgment which—and they were very clear on this point—will not be pretty.

We didn't have much to do with the Catholics in our small Indiana town, except to occasionally remark on their odd rituals,



because, as a recovering Southern Baptist, this is the pope I've been waiting for.

HE WAS BORN Jorge Mario Bergoglio, but when he became pope he chose the name Francis, because it has fewer syllables and no “g’s. (It’s hard to stop saying “bergoglio” once you get started.) The original Saint Francis, as you know, left a wealthy life to live among the common folk and commune with birds and other animals, which back then, no offense, were better conversationalists than the common folk. He was known for his humility, a trait that Pope Francis has sought to emulate through acts of mercy, justice, and limiting his tweets to less than 100 a day.

Pope Francis has distinguished himself by preaching the gospel of forgiveness and tolerance, by calling for economic justice, and by wielding the mighty sword of righteous anger against those flat-earthers who DENY THE FACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE!!

Okay, that last one was mine, and I’m not the pope. He’s got millions of followers. I’ve got 700 words, none of them written with the spirit of humility shown by Saint Francis. Although, to be fair, I do talk to my cat.

I WAS LOOKING forward to meeting the pope last month when he made a surprise visit to our office. He was in the nation’s capital to share his vision for creation care and economic

fairness, and since we’ve been advocating those things for decades I just assumed he’d stop by with a high five and a *buen trabajo*, which is Spanish for “heckofajob.” But he never showed up, even though we had snacks. But that’s understandable. Most of the roads were blocked in his honor, although that little car he rides in could probably have gotten through.

It was definitely hard for the rest of us to get around in D.C. that week. In fact, I had to ride my bike for two days, drastically reducing my carbon footprint, which is good, but missing the traffic reports on NPR, which is bad, because they would have told me where to ride my bike.

But it was for the best, because my commute took me right through the places the pope visited—the National Shrine, the Capitol building, St. Matthew’s Cathedral, and Potbelly’s, which has that new pulled-pork sandwich. Okay, that last one was mine. But I wouldn’t have seen the sign driving in my car. Nope. It took riding on the sidewalk to see that. (By the way, why do pedestrians think they can just turn without signaling?)

So thank you, Pope Francis, for bringing the message of hope and forgiveness to the world, and for reminding us that global warming is caused by human activity. Come to think of it, so is pulled pork. ■

Ed Spivey Jr. is art director of Sojourners.

Is 'Poperific' a word? How about 'Popetastic'? 'Popenado'?

their odd prayers (sometimes to a *woman!*), and their great fish fries, which Baptists could attend, under cover. We also noticed the lack of American flags on their altars. How was that Christian?

But as I grew older and experimented with different church traditions, I became more open to Catholicism and frequently visited on Sundays, under cover.

Granted, I never cared for the confessional booth—you can’t take food in there—and the singing was a little lackluster during Mass. On the other hand, the congregation could leave during the final song, as opposed to staying in the pews until somebody got saved, hopefully before Mom’s roast had to come out of the oven.

Lately the Catholic Church has become particularly appealing to me

Ken Davis



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Your congregation can help a poor child whose only wish is to have his or her cleft repaired. You can be the miracle these children need.

Order your Welcome Kit at smiletrain.org/faith
or reach out to croarke@smiletrain.org
to get started on your fundraiser today!



ACTIVATE
LOVE



TRANSFORM
LIVES



CHANGE



THE WORLD



When we **GIVE** our voices to speak out against injustice anywhere, we make a difference. When we give our time to work for fairness **SO** all people know that they are created equal, we make a difference. When we give of ourselves to fight **INJUSTICE**, we make a difference. When we say **TODAY IS** the day, we make a difference. Progress is **ONLY** possible when an individual sees that it is. A prayer, a discussion, **A** donation for a particular project may soon be a **MEMORY** for you, but your legacy will live well past **TOMORROW**.



Give to a Social Justice, or any other, Advance project
on UMC #GivingTuesday – Dec. 1.